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The Medici and The Italian Renaissance

By

Oliphant Smeaton, M.A.

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To

THE MEMORY OF

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to whom, as a publisher, theological literature owes so much, and by whose work as citizen, civic administrator, and Christian philanthropist, the lot of so many has been lightened and brightened, this volume is gratefully and reverently inscribed by

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE

THOUGH this sketch of the relations of the Medici to the Renaissance is as full as the limits of the Series permit, yet I am painfully conscious of many serious omissions, which under less stringent exigencies of space I should certainly have supplied. I cannot lay claim, therefore, to any completeness of survey from either a historical or a literary point of view. To secure that end as many volumes would have been necessary as here there are chapters. My desire has been merely to supplement what I conceived to be lacking in the valuable works of Symonds, Roscoe, Armstrong, and Von Reumont, namely, the tracing of that continuity of aim which ran through the Renaissance patronage of the great house of Medici from the days of Cosimo, "Pater Patriæ," to those of Pope Clement VII. Its members were one and all imbued with a lofty enthusiasm in the cause of culture which never deserted them even during the darkest winter of their fortunes. To them the Renaissance owed more, for contributing their share to the realisation of the aggregate result of European culture, than to any other of those public-spirited individuals whose delight it was to play the Mæcenas

during that period. That they were "Epoch-Makers" in this sense it has been my aim to prove; whether I have succeeded is for the reader to judge.

While I have endeavoured, during the years devoted to the study of the subject, to read everything of any value that has been written on the subject, my obligations are especially great to the monumental works of Symonds and Roscoe. The former, taken all in all, is still the most comprehensive, most profound, and most picturesque study which has yet appeared of that marvellous mingling of sunshine and shadow characterising the Renaissance epoch.

I had intended at the end of the volume to have given a list of the works that had been helpful to me in my study of the subject, for the convenience of those desiring to pursue the theme further than has been possible here. But as the footnote references are very full throughout the volume, to mention them a second time seemed almost a work of supererogation.

OLIPHANT SMEATON.

The Grange,
Edinburgh, *October* 1901.

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THE MEDICI

AND

THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

CHAPTER I

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Introductory

y certain cults of popular criticism to which all is *viare* that does not savour of romanticism and odernity, the Renaissance has been styled an ex-usted influence. Only the most superficial acquaint-ce with what the great movement has really achieved uld prompt such a statement. The Renaissance, as principle of intellectual revivification, is as potently erative to-day, though under different forms, as it as four and a half centuries ago. True, the flow the currents of its culture has now embedded itself deeply in the character and idiosyncrasies of manity as a whole that it has been lost to sight en no longer identified with the intellectual pro-ess of some special nation such as the Italian or e German. The novelty of its influence having rn off, people no longer appreciate so highly that

to which their attention is no longer drawn so u mistakably. In a word, the effects of the Renaissan are present with us under so many diverse and distin forms that we are apt to forget the source in co templation of the results. Scarce a new phase thought is there in Europe to-day, or a fresh develo ment in either culture or science, but owes its genes to that intellectual reawakening which took pla in the fifteenth century, and to which we accord t title of "the Renaissance."

To any careful student of that mighty revolutio intellectual, moral, spiritual, and artistic, by whi "Mediæval" became "Modern" Europe, two fac make themselves manifest the further such research are pushed. These are, first, that the Renaissan owed much, as regards its inception, its developme its characteristics, and finally its success, to Italia self-sacrifice and Italian passion for culture; an second, that pre-eminent among the patrons of t "New Learning"—and they were neither few n insignificant—were the city of Florence and t Florentine Medici.

The aim of this volume, then, is to vindicate t right of the great Tuscan "merchant princes"[1] to regarded, through their connection with the Renai sance, as "Epoch Makers." Our contention is, th had Giovanni de' Medici—the founder of the greatne

[1] "*Merchant Princes*"—used here in its original signification. T Medici were traders and bankers pure and simple. They ru Florence while appearing to abstain from all interference with politi They, however, took care that all the leading offices were held their dependants. Not until after the time of Lorenzo the Magnifice did they begin to show their hand. Piero, father of Lorenzo, refus a Neapolitan fief, on the ground that he was "only a tradesman."

of the family, Cosimo his son, Lorenzo his great grandson, and Giovanni, afterwards Pope Leo x., his great-great-grandson, failed to take the deep and absorbing interest they did in the movement, it would not have accomplished, at least in equal degree, that mission of the intellectual regeneration of Europe it was destined to achieve. In all probability it would have died down into a mere philological "insect-study" of the Greek and Latin classics, without effecting that stimulation of life, thought, enterprise, and ambition from the Levant to the shores of that "New World," whose discovery was due to the scientific principles diffused by the "New Learning."[1]

The question naturally arises at this stage, What was that "Renaissance" of which well-nigh everyone knows the name, but so few the scope of its signification? Nothing is easier to define in that vaguely general sense so characteristic of the sciolist, nothing more difficult in a manner calculated to supply accurate information to the truth-seeker. The former type of scholarship "labels" it "a mere literary revival," and classifies it as an effect of the familiar historic cause—the fall of Constantinople; a truer reading of history notes that the literary revival was only a phase of that mighty movement which awakened the spirit of man along so many diverse and distinct lines, and that it was already well past its adolescence before the Byzantine Empire came to an end.

What then *was* the "Renaissance"? It was the intellectual, moral, spiritual, and artistic re-birth of Europe and the genesis of its culture, the emancipation also of the soul of Western humanity from the

[1] See p. 251.

bondage of Scholasticism and of "Authority" in ethics and theology. It cut the Gordian knot of the Papal claim to be the arbiter of orthodoxy and the keeper of the conscience of the world, and it inaugurated liberty of thought and of speculation. It was the creator of a new Ideal of Beauty in Art, of a nobler Ideal of Duty in conduct. It was the infusion of the "spirit of modernity" into letters, influenced by which men described things as they really were, not as the Pope and his College of Cardinals sought to make them appear.[1] It was, in fine, the rise of a new impulse in literature, of a new canon in criticism, the welling up of an enthusiastic delight in freedom of thought, speech, and action—freedom which eventually culminated in the spiritual emancipation of the "Reformation," in the overleaping of the time-honoured boundaries of the Old World by the "Discovery of America," and in the revolution wrought in the domain of letters by the "Invention of Printing."

Of all these essential characteristics of the Renaissance, Italy supplied the germs. For, as Symonds aptly says—

"The culture which formed the great achievement of the Italian Renaissance, and which was diffused throughout Europe, uniting men of all races and all creeds in speculative and literary activity, evoking sympathies and stimulating antagonisms upon vital questions of universal import, was necessary for the evolution of the world as we now know it. In many senses we have already transcended the original

[1] Saintsbury, *History of Criticism*, vol. i. p. 483; Pater, *Renaissance*, chap. i.

conditions of that culture. But we owe to it our spiritual solidarity, our feeling of intellectual identity, our habit of pouring convergent contributions from divers quarters into the stock of indestructible experience."[1]

The Renaissance was both a cause and an effect. While it revolutionised Western Europe, it was itself the product of forces that began to work away back in the dim dawn of Grecian culture, when the Athenian Socrates put his first question to his Sophist antagonists, and when the Roman Gracchi, three hundred years thereafter, became the proto-martyrs in the cause of democratic freedom. The Plebs, as the representatives in the Republic of the modern democracy, had wrested their freedom from the oligarchic patricians, only to see the State itself enslaved by the ambition of the Cæsars. Thereupon freedom died as despotism became dominant. To the political despotism of the Cæsars succeeded the spiritual despotism of the Papacy—the Papacy of the type of Hildebrand (Gregory VII.) and Innocent III. By these two agencies freedom of thought was stifled for over fifteen centuries until the human will gathered sufficient strength to burst its bonds and force its way into the glorious sunlight of intellectual and spiritual liberty. "The Renaissance," or that "Realisation of the freedom of the Human Spirit" by which the fetters of Scholasticism were broken away from the intellect of Europe, first became an influencing factor in the development of the modern world *about* the commencement of the last quarter of the fourteenth century—in other words, *about* the time when Pope

[1] *Renaissance in Italy*—Italian Literature, vol. v. p. 428.

Gregory XI. returned from Avignon to Rome on the termination of the "Babylonian exile of the Church." To date its rise more definitely, to give the supposed year and day where it manifested itself—as was the custom until comparatively recently, to ascribe it, in fine, to the fall of Constantinople and the dispersion of the learned Greeks throughout Europe, is, as we have said, as unsatisfactory a solution of the difficulty as to attribute American independence to the incident of the Boston tea-ships, or to assign the existence of the Goodwin Sands to the malign influence of Tenterden Steeple. The Fall of Constantinople was merely an "accident" in the historic development of the Renaissance, and the subsequent dispersion of the learned Greeks only a consequent of that accident.

While to deny the potency of the influence of these Hellenic scholars would be to shut our eyes to the plain teaching of facts, yet the most elementary study of the great movement impresses on the mind this circumstance, that for upwards of sixty years before the Byzantine Empire tottered to its fall, the study of Greek had been prosecuted in Italy, and Hellenic *illuminati* migrated from the shores of the Bosphorus to the shadow of Giotto's campanile in Florence, to the shores of the Bay of Naples or to the banks of the classic Tiber. The Tuscan Petrarch, as early as 1350, urged his fellow-countryman Boccaccio to study Greek, an advice followed by the latter, who entertained in his own house, to quote Dr. Garnett's pithy description,[1] "an erudite but uncomfortable Greek,"

[1] *History of Italian Literature* ("Literatures of the Nations Series") by R. Garnett, LL.D., London. W. Heineman.

Leontius Pilatus, with whom he read Homer; while in 1396, on the invitation of several leading Florentines, Emanuel Chrysoloras (of whom more anon) was lecturing on Greek literature and teaching the language in Valdarno. Many learned Greeks also settled in Europe during the period 1400–1453, induced thereto by the rewards held out to those capable of giving instruction in their language. Another proof of the interest taken in Hellenic studies long prior to the Fall of Constantinople, reaches us on the authority of Poggio, who relates that while acting as one of the numerous secretaries to the Roman Curia at the Council of Constance (1414–1418) three friends and he spent their spare time in hunting for Greek MSS. in the monasteries of the district. Some of the prizes they secured were of priceless value, as we shall note later on in our survey when sketching the life of Cosimo de' Medici. Then, too, Niccòlo de' Niccoli, Bruni, Traversari, Palla degli Strozzi, Gianozzo Manetti, Filelfo, Aurispa, Ciriaco, and other distinguished Humanists, all flourished, or at least had passed their prime, prior to 1453; while of the two greatest teachers of the age, Vittorino da Feltre and Guarino da Verona, one died in 1446 aged 69, seven years before the fall of the Eastern Empire, and the other at the age of 90, in 1460, seven years after it.

The dispersion of the remaining Greek scholars, upon the fall of the Byzantine capital, certainly gave an enormous impetus to the progress of culture, by scattering these learned exiles, each with his collection of valuable MSS., throughout Continental Europe, and thus rendering the study of the classics more practicable to many culture-seekers than before. Further,

the hard pioneering work in clearing an intellectual tract suitable for the reception of the later and better seeds of culture, had already been achieved by Emanuel Chrysoloras, by Georgios Trapezuntios, by Gemisthus Pletho, by Bessarion, Filelfo, Guarino, and Aurispa, with their coadjutors and immediate successors. Their work in breaking up the soil of the European mind, so long hardened by the sterilising influence of "Scholasticism" and "Authority" in learning, as well as in religion and morals, has never been appraised at its true value. Theirs was the labour of the real intellectual pioneer, and to their self-sacrificing efforts must be ascribed the fact that the Western mind was so well prepared for the advent of the remaining Hellenic scholars into Europe, on their "hegira" from Constantinople in 1439, at the time of the pseudo-Union between the Eastern and Western Churches, and also after Mohammed II. had captured "the Queen of the Bosphorus."

Such being the nature of the Italian Renaissance, such too the causes contributing to its origin and development, and such the approximate epoch of its inception, the next question which arises is—the place at which the great movement first made itself felt in measure the most ample; and further, what were the circumstances under which it took its rise? Whenever one refers to the Italian Renaissance, inevitably the idea of sunny Tuscany arises in association therewith. Other provinces in the historic peninsula—Milan, Naples, Rome, Ferrara, Venice, etc.—interested themselves in what we may call the "piecemeal encouragement" of the Renaissance, some devoting themselves more especially to the development of

letters, others to the fostering of painting or sculpture, others to architecture or to producing the best editions of the classics. Tuscany, however, distinguished herself by her *universal*—or better by her *all-round*—patronage of the movement; and into the mind of the student there at once flashes the recollection of the names of Tuscan painters and sculptors, Tuscan poets and historians, Tuscan scholars and architects, who caught the subtle Spirit of the Age, and left it impressed on their work as at once a symbol and a secret, like the shadowy elusive smile, half of joy, half of fear, which Leonardo da Vinci left on the face of his unfinished "Mona Lisa,"—a Renaissance heritage, at once of delight and of despair to his successors.

But in Tuscany, to quote the paradox of Politian—"Florence was the part that was greater than the whole." The more one strives to arrive at some true and impartial conclusion regarding the part she played in the great drama of the Renaissance, the deeper becomes the conviction, that to eliminate the Florentine element from the combination of forces producing the result, would be equivalent to representing *King Lear* with the *title rôle* excised, or expecting a watch to go with its mainspring removed.

"Florence was essentially the city of intelligence in modern times. Other nations have surpassed the Italians in their genius, the quality which gave a superhuman power of insight to Shakespeare and a universal sympathy to Goethe. But nowhere else except at Athens has the whole population of a city been so permeated with ideas so highly intellectual by nature, so keen in perception, so witty and so subtle, as at

Florence. The fine and delicate spirit of the Italians existed in quintessence among the Florentines."[1]

Florence therefore for many years was the mainspring of the Italian Renaissance. Had space permitted I should have liked to trace Florentine history from the days of the strife between the Donati and the Cerchi, otherwise the "Neri" and "Bianchi," when the democracy of Florence took its rise, down to the age of Giovanni de' Medici, great-grandfather of Lorenzo the Magnificent, noting the constant conflicts between the "Trades," or "Arti," and the nobility, ending in the complete "subjugation" of the latter; noting the conflicts, also, between the Guelfs or Pope's party, which posed as the representatives of the municipal or popular faction, and the Ghibellines or Emperor's party, which, relying for support upon the "Grandi" (nobles) preferred an oligarchic to a democratic rule; noting, finally, the manner in which, after maintaining her freedom for so many centuries, Florence permitted the chains to be imperceptibly wound around her, — chains which, gilded though they were and concealed under the most cherished "forms" of democratic liberty, were nevertheless the signs of enslavement. Such a survey, however, would be at variance with our plan, namely, to trace the relation of the Medici as a great Florentine family to the Renaissance. But the narrative of their connection with the "New Learning" is virtually the history of Italian Humanism and of Italian art during these epochs, for there was scarcely a scholar of note who visited the peninsula, or any native belonging to its States who came to eminence that did not, at some

[1] Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, vol. i. chap. v. p. 194.

ime or other, partake of the generous bounty of the Medici. To them, in common with the Albizzi and Palla degli Strozzi, was due the fact that Florence came to be regarded as the "eye of Italy," as Athens of old was styled "the eye of Greece."

Florence lost her enjoyment of the "essence" or principles" of liberty by her excessive devotion to its forms." Had she laid less stress on the letter and insisted on the "spirit" of civic freedom being more rigorously maintained, she would not have fallen so easy a victim to the wiles of Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici. She was assailed at her weakest point. The virtue which in days gone by had been her strength now proved her weakness. Regarding this, Roscoe aptly says—

"The great degree of freedom enjoyed by the citizens of Florence had the most favourable effects on their character and gave them a decided superiority over the inhabitants of the rest of Italy. The popular nature of the government not subjected to the will of an individual, as in many of the surrounding States, nor restricted, like that of Venice, to a particular class, was a constant incitement to exertion. Nor was it only on the great body of the people that the good effects of this system were apparent; even those who claimed the privileges of ancestry felt the advantages of a rivalship which prevented their sinking into indolence, and called upon them to support by their own talents the rank and influence which they had derived from those of their ancestors . . . in Florence. Every citizen was conversant with, and might hope, at least, to partake in the government." [1]

It was this very devotion to freedom which furnished the Medici with the means of achieving their plan of

[1] *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, by W. Roscoe.

national enslavement. This point is admirably stated by Symonds—

"Cosmo de' Medici succeeded in rendering his family necessary to the State of Florence. He contrived so to complicate the public finances with his own banking business, and so to bind the leading burghers to himself by various obligations, that, while he in no way affected the style of a despot, Florence belonged to his house more surely than Bologna to the Bentivogli. For the continuation of this authority, based on intrigue and cemented by corruption, it was absolutely needful that the spirit of Cosmo should survive in his successors. A single false move, by unmasking the tyranny so carefully veiled, by offending the republican vanities of the Florentines, or by employing force where everything had hitherto been gained by craft, would at this epoch have destroyed the prospects of the Medicean family. . . . The roots of the Medici clung to no part of Florence in particular. They seemed superficial, yet they crept beneath the ground in all directions. Intertwined as they were with every interest both public and private in the city, to cut them out implied the excision of some vital member."[1]

Yet despite this we must admit that all that was truly great or noble in the Italy of the Renaissance found its familiar home in Florence, where the spirit of freedom, if only an idea, still ruled, where the populace was still capable of being stirred to supersensual enthusiasm, and "where the flame of the modern intellect burned with its purest, whitest lustre."

Florence owed much of what she was able to achieve in the cause of the Renaissance to the influence conferred on her by her geographical position. Situate as she was in close proximity to the great arterial

[1] *The Renaissance*, vol. ii. p. 226. Cf. also Pater, *Renaissance*, chap. i.

horoughfares of commerce that ramified all through Europe, and along which merchants from all countries vere perpetually passing, Florence gradually became ne of the chief emporiums of the world. Her citizens vere merchants first and politicians next, and much of he sturdy liberty-loving character of the inhabitants vas due to the fact that civic freedom was essential to he prosecution of most of the great commercial *coups* or which its traders were famous. The Medici, even t the time when they were riveting the political hains most securely upon the rights of the people, vere unwearied in their eulogies of the liberty-loving haracter of the citizens. They had thoroughly auged the difference between freedom in theory and reedom in fact. "Let them vaunt themselves free as ong as they please," said Cosimo, "the Father of his Country," to his sons Piero and Giovanni, "provided ve have control over them in fact by controlling the *orse*." This view his greater grandson also main-ained. Lorenzo the Magnificent addressed the Floren-ines as his "fellow-citizens" at the very time when he last shreds of civic freedom were disappearing.

Again, if Florence were regarded as the "mainspring" f the Italian Renaissance, she may also be styled its nurse." No one can understand the Renaissance right who does not realise that it was almost as much "re-birth" as it was a "new birth,"—in other words, revivification of what had already existed in the past. he forces it released from the deathlike slumber of Iediævalism were world-old as regards their inception. n the Hebrew theocracy, among the manifold polities f Greece, even amid the militarism of Rome, Republican r Imperial, can be noted the same passionate longing

after an Ideal of Beauty, the same supreme desire after a reconciliation between Moral Precept and individual Ethical practice, the same eager insistence upon what may be called the Elemental Verities of the spiritual world — God, human destiny, and the mysterious existence of evil—as obtained prominence during the Platonic "revival" under Gemisthus Pletho and Marsilio Ficino. Visible equally in the penitential Psalms and in the awful thunders of pre-Exilic prophecy, written as though in letters of fire against the deep moral background of Greek tragedy, and starting out into as unmistakable prominence amid the bright optimism of Virgil and Horace as amid the despairing pessimism of Juvenal and Persius, is an ineradicable conviction in the existence of a nobler destiny for man than any to which he had yet attained. To the Hebrew it seemed achievable in what may be called a "theocratic" monarchy existing for the glory of God, and in which that glory would be sought by a national development along lines of progress strictly spiritual in character. To the Greek it revealed itself as an insatiable craving after the realisation of the highest type or ideal of Excellence, artistic, moral, and intellectual; while to Rome the summit of its destiny and the goal of its endeavours seemed achieved in the attainment of world-wide political domination.

All three "forces" were operative in Europe at the commencement of the fifteenth century. Hebrew, as the language in which the older "oracles of God" were delivered to man, had always, even in the Darkest Ages, been studied by one or two scholars[1] who sought

[1] Anselm, Abelard, Peter Lombard, and others all knew Hebrew and were influenced by its study.

the society of the Jewish rabbis that they might learn from them the principles of Old Testament exegesis. By this means the influence of the Hebraic modes of thought was maintained in Europe. The Hellenic element was also at work through the memories, dim and indistinct though they might be, preserved even during the darkest ages, of the literature, the architecture, the art, the philosophy—in a word, of all that went to compose that Grecian culture whose efflorescence had been so glorious. Finally, the Roman element contributed its share in moulding, during the Dark and Mediæval Ages, those political, municipal, and legal institutions which, having survived the successive shocks of Gauls, Goths, and Huns, remained to supply to Europe the basis and the framework of its politics and its laws.

Earliest of all Italian cities, and because earliest meriting the honour due to a pioneer, Florence realised the importance of those three "Old World" forces. She fostered them and directed them into those channels where their influence would be most potent in fertilising the intellectual soil of Italy. De Lyra, as the result of his visit to Florence and Rome in 1335, when Provincial of the Franciscan Order, had founded a school of Hebrew scholars in the former city, which maintained its position and extended its reputation until Oriental studies became common in the middle of the fifteenth century.[1] The influence of the Roman political constitution also is to be traced in the writings of several of the older Florentine historians,

[1] A Hebrew printing press was at work at Reggio as early as 1475, while the whole Hebrew Bible appeared at Soncino in 1488. Cf. De Rossi's *Annales Hebræo-Typographici Sec. xv.*, Parma, 1795.

and many of the laws of the great Tuscan Republic were based on those of Rome.

The classical spirit of Greece, however, was that which appealed with most force to the impressionable Florentines. During 900 years that influence had been largely dormant, as far as Italy and Europe were concerned, its place being usurped by a pseudo-classicism which meant only as much of the stream of classical culture as could filter through the soil-bound sterility of monkish bigotry. During the Dark and Middle Ages true Hellenic culture, like the Seven Sleepers, was in its cave slumbering unremembered. Scholasticism, which in its tendency was really in many respects anti-classical, dominated all the existing departments of letters and crushed out every semblance of freedom of judgment.

But the hour of the reawakening of the spirit of Italian culture had come. When the two electric currents met — that of the native Latin learning which, imperfect though it was in principles and methods, had lingered on in forgotten corners throughout the centuries, and that of the semi-pagan culture of Byzantium which idealised Socrates equally with Christ, and engrafted the Platonic philosophy on the Christian stock—then the reawakening of the Western mind took place, the reawakening which broke the lethargy of Mediævalism and permitted modern Europe to escape from the slumber that was synonymous with intellectual death.

Florence was the earliest scene of this mighty "reawakening" or "re-birth." Neither title is inappropriate to describe the great movement, inasmuch as the change effected in the mind of Europe by the

Renaissance was so radical as to savour more of a rebirth than a reawakening. On the other hand, there is a continuity to be traced throughout which renders the Europe of Plato and Pindar and the Europe of Petrarch and Erasmus practically one as regards ideals and aims of culture.

Petrarch and Boccaccio were the heralds of that glorious dawn whereof Manuel Chrysoloras was the "Morning Star." Under whatever figure we regard the rise of the movement, one fact must always be kept in remembrance, that the effects of the Renaissance were such as completely to revolutionise the intellectual life, not only of Italy but of Europe. Nor is this rhetorical hyperbole. Though the influence of the Renaissance might not be felt in all places at the same time—nay, in some did not appear until much later—its effects were in their nature the same in all. From Sicily to Scotland, from Spain to the banks of Tiber, that mighty inspiration spread its subtle and supreme afflatus abroad, not only expanding the ideas but elevating the aspirations of scholars of all countries and all conditions of life. As the devout Mussulmans, wherever they may be, always turn the eyes in prayer towards the direction in which they believe Mecca to be, as being the centre of the world to them, so in the stirring decades of the fifteenth century, during those momentous crises in the history of culture which marked its course, the eyes of European scholars turned eagerly and often wistfully towards Florence—as the Orient of Italian Letters.

CHAPTER II

The Medici — Their Motives and their Methods

Of all the great Florentine families none have been handed down the epochs of history crowned more unanimously with honourable laurels by the suffrages of their fellow-citizens, in recognition of their share in promoting the Renaissance, than the Medici. While many people then and now might be found ready to contest their right, from a political point of view, to aught save execration as "the executioners of Florentine liberties," [1] their services to the Renaissance cover a multitude of sins.

As the friends of learning and the munificent patrons of culture, the house of Medici richly merits remembrance. Condemn as we may their political tyranny and few nowadays will be found like Roscoe to defend it, their name will be eternally associated with that glorious dawn of modern European scholarship which gilded the fifteenth century,—a dawn to which we might fittingly apply Wordsworth's couplet on the French Revolution—

> "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven."

[1] The epithet applied by Rinaldo degli Albizzi to Cosimo de' Medici

Though recent investigations and a more critical analysis of their policy have tempered, on the one hand, the indiscriminate eulogies of Roscoe,[1] they have also disproved many of the bitter charges brought against them by Sismondi[2] and Gino Capponi.[3] That their crimes were manifold cannot be denied. The character of even the best of them was all too frequently stained with the vices of their age, to a degree reprobated even in that age when moral squeamishness was not general. Discounting all that, however, the fact remains that they were the agents selected to promote the development of the Italian Renaissance. Strange though such a choice may seem, the nature and results of the designs of the Deity are not to be gauged by the character of the instruments He employs to achieve His ends, and it is beyond question that the Medici were not only utilised as foster-parents of the Renaissance, but were also chosen to plant the seed that gave to Europe the harvest of the Reformation.

Though they afterwards attained to such distinction as to intermarry with the royal families of Europe, the house of Medici was not originally noble. Despite the fictitious genealogies manufactured at the time when Catharine de' Medici was betrothed to Henry II. of France—genealogies carrying the origin of the house back to the time of Charlemagne and to a certain Averardo de' Medici, who for his valour in killing a gigantic plunderer, Mugello, that was devastating the country, was permitted to adopt as his coat of arms, the six *palle* or balls which hung from the mace of his

[1] *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici.*
[2] *History of the Italian Republics.*
[3] *Storia della Republica di Firenze.*

antagonist and had left their dints on the victor's shield—the family may have been known, but certainly were not in any sense distinguished, before the middle of the fourteenth century.

One fact alone is unassailable, namely, that from a very early period in their history, the family adopted the popular side in those prolonged conflicts, first between Guelf and Ghibelline, and later between the "Grandi," or nobles, and the "Arti," or trade guilds. These latter, divided still further into traders or masters, and operatives or craftsmen, were distributed into seven Greater and fourteen Lesser Guilds, the most influential of all being the Guild of the Wool Carders.

In 1266 the Signory of Florence decided that the government of the city should be committed entirely into the hands of the "Arti." No inhabitant who had not enrolled himself as a craftsman in one of the guilds could exercise any function of burghership. To be *scioperato*, or without industry, was to be without power, without rank or place of honour in the State.

Such an enactment as this tended to exclude the "Grandi," or nobles, from all participation in the government of the commonwealth, and gave rise to prolonged disturbances and faction fights. After the battle of Campaldino in 1283, however, in which the Ghibellines, with whom the "Grandi" had of course sided, were totally defeated, very severe laws were passed against them. Not only were all civic rights taken from them, but even the privilege of residing within the walls of Florence was denied, save under the most oppressive restrictions, while severe penalties were attached to any breach on their part, of the laws. Ere long the "Grandi" had very largely enrolled them-

selves in the "Guilds," a course which resulted in producing in the latter fresh dissensions between what might be termed the "aristocratic" and the "democratic" *trades*, or, in other words, the struggle wherewith we are so familiar to-day, between "Capital and Labour," or more specifically still, between "Employers and Employed." In 1378 these dissensions culminated in the "Tumult of the Ciompi," or Wool Carders, during which the operatives drove the Florentine Signory from the Palazzo Pubblico (Civic Chambers) and assumed the government of the city.

This was the flood in the tide of the affairs of the house of Medici, which was to lead on to all their future fortune. Salvestro de' Medici was Gonfalonier of Justice when the tumult occurred. He warmly supported the operatives in their demands for the recognition of their privileges, and, moreover, secured that there should not longer be any distinction between the "Greater" and the "Lesser" guilds, or "Arti," but an equality of representation. As Armstrong[1] very truly remarks—

"The State henceforth should supervise every department of life; a progressive income-tax, the exclusion of aliens, the repudiation of the interest on State debts—all formed clauses of an essentially modern programme. The guild system was shaken to its foundation by the conflict between the Mercantile Arti and the Tradesmen's Arti—between those of the employers and those of the employed, while within each guild the 'prentices took the lead from the masters."

[1] *Lorenzo de' Medici and Florence in the Fifteenth Century*, by E. Armstrong, M.A. ("Heroes of the Nations Series." G. P. Putnam's Sons). An admirable study of the period.

When chaos had worked its own cure and order was restored the foundations of Florentine society were completely changed. Henceforth wealth, and wealth alone, was to count for aught in achieving distinction in the Tuscan Republic. The way was being prepared for the advancement of the Medici to supreme power in the State. One notable reform Salvestro succeeded in achieving. He secured the abolition of the "Law of Ammoniti,"[1] which placed so dangerous a weapon of oppression in the hands of rulers.

Although Salvestro and his cousin Veri attained to high office in the Florentine Republic, and were held in esteem by the people, the person who laid the foundation of that greatness his posterity enjoyed for so many generations, was Giovanni de' Medici, the great-grandfather of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Roscoe's terse summing up of his character and policy can scarcely be surpassed—

"By a strict attention to commerce he acquired immense wealth: by his affability, moderation, and liberality he ensured the confidence and esteem of his fellow-citizens. Without seeking after the offices of the Republic, he was honoured with them all. The maxims which, uniformly pursued, raised the house of Medici to the splendour which it afterwards enjoyed are to be found in the charge given by this venerable old man on his deathbed to his two sons Cosimo and Lorenzo: 'I feel' (said he) 'that I have lived the time prescribed me.

[1] "*Law of Ammoniti.*" This custom provided that those whom the State believed to be plotting against its liberties should be "admonished" to be more circumspect. But the fact of being "admonished" entailed loss of civic rights and exclusion from all offices of government. The nobles used it freely to bolster up their power.

die content, leaving you, my sons, in affluence, in health, and such a station that whilst you follow my example you may ve in your native place honoured and respected.'"[1]

Giovanni, however, as we shall presently see, fol-wed a course of action which, to the subtle-minded nd ambitious Cosimo, would have been impracticable. Vith politics he rarely meddled. As a banker pure nd simple he laid the foundations of that colossal usiness which made the house of Medici, towards ne close of Cosimo's life, the bankers of the world. esides, the times were not alike, and what was quite ossible for a Medici to do in the fourteenth century as attended by almost insurmountable difficulties in ne fifteenth.

Giovanni was a far-seeing man. Out of the very epth of his love of country he could discern the vofold danger threatening her—that from within, the restless ambition of such leading families as ne Albizzi, the Uzzani, the Valori, the Ricci, the lberti, whose cliques were constantly playing upon ne perilously impressionable feelings of the populace, ptivated now by one leader and anon by another; so, that ever-menacing danger from without, in the alousy of Florence manifested by such Italian tates as Naples and Milan, when taken in conjunc-on with the greed of the greater Western powers, hose longing gaze was even then beginning to turn wards those fertile plains of Italy.

Giovanni was born about 1360. The precise year as always been in doubt. Cosimo, his first-born, owever, once stated that his father had married com-

[1] The dying charge to his sons is given in full on p. 27.

paratively late in life, and that he was over thirty when his eldest son saw the light. At the time of the "Tumult of the Ciompi," in 1378, four Florentine families may be said to have been so markedly democratic that they supported the "Lesser" in place of the "Greater" Arti—the Medici, the Alberti, the Scali, and the Ricci! When order was restored in 1381, and the aristocratic party again recovered power, the Albizzi came to the front and ruled Florence until their banishment in 1434. Owing to Salvestro's action the name of Medici was abhorrent to these oligarchs. Accordingly, in his earlier years, Giovanni was nearly ruined by that system of unjust assessments and forced loans which the Albizzi introduced, but which the Medici themselves were in after years to reduce to the perfection of a science when applied to the removal of a dangerous antagonist. Giovanni recognised in a moment that nothing save ruin was to be achieved by opposing the dominant family at that particular juncture. Maso degli Albizzi was a man of profound political ability, great intellectual force, wide knowledge of his fellow-men, united to much affability and charm of manner. In many respects he was a man of scholarly instincts, if not of actual acquirements, and he showed himself from the first friendly to the "New Learning." The great lever, however, wherewith he was able to move Florence at his will was his immense wealth, which he spent freely on the people.

By the excesses of the "Ciompi Tumult" the order-loving section of the community, by whom Maso was largely supported, had been seriously alarmed. On weighing the chances of a political career as the de-

clared opponent of Maso, Giovanni de' Medici, with a prudence as conspicuous as it was commendable, came to the conclusion he would best serve the interests of his family by seeming for the time to acquiesce in the Albizzi domination. In secret, however, he devoted himself to the patient extension of his banking business, already one of the most considerable in Italy.

To this policy once adopted he rigidly adhered. He retired from all participation in public affairs, fostered by every means in his power his financial resources, and extended his foreign agencies and connections. The Albizzi were not slow to note and to rejoice at the change. Soon they ceased to oppress him, or to frustrate his commercial schemes—nay, they even made overtures of friendship to which he was not slow to respond. Other opponents to the oligarchs arose to fill his place. Ere long he became in a political sense —forgotten! Meantime he had married, his sons Cosimo and Lorenzo were born—the former in 1389, the latter in 1394, and he found new interests, in addition to his banking-house, in his home, in training his boys, and in cultivating his garden on the slopes of the sunny hills of Fiesole.

Giovanni de' Medici, though less celebrated, was as a man little less remarkable than his son Cosimo. His policy towards the Albizzi was the result of profound political prevision. He recognised that sooner or later his family, if they were to fulfil their destiny, must come into deadly rivalry with the dominant oligarchs. But he also recognised that wealth had become the great lever in moving at will the Florentine State, and that the Albizzi were spending more than they could afford in their efforts to keep the supreme power

of the Republic in their own hands. Time was on the side of the Medici. Giovanni knew how to run a waiting race, and he was fully convinced that in this contest at least the race would not be to the swift, but to those endowed with powers of endurance.

To record the political history of the Medici family while detailing their connection with the rise and development of the Renaissance would be a task quite outside the scope of this work. Henceforward, therefore, I shall only touch upon the political acts or policy of the several members of the great house, in so far as these may chance to exercise an influence on the progress of the Renaissance. Among them were to be found representatives of all types of mind and will. Giovanni's policy, for example, was in marked contrast to that of his son Cosimo and his great-grandson Lorenzo. He was a striking type of the cast-iron mediæval or pre-Renaissance mind which rather looked askance at the "New Learning," because dreading its unsettling tendency. Giovanni was a firm believer in the gospel of "Use and Wont." To him progress was abhorrent as savouring of innovation, and innovation, as he knew, too often meant revolution and a disturbance of business relations.

Yet this was the man, as we shall see in the next chapter, who in 1427, when he was a septuagenarian, and beginning to feel the infirmities of age, recognising that the day of battle had come at last, placed himself at the head of the "People's Party" in opposition to the Albizzi, and demanded a more equitable system of taxation than prevailed at the time. Largely owing to his efforts the method of civic assessment known as "the Catasto," whereby the rich were

mulcted as well as the poor, came into force,[1] and greatly crippled the power of the oligarchic Albizzi. To Giovanni is due the credit of having been the first to prove that the Albizzi and their clique were not omnipotent, and thus to prepare the way for the victory of his son Cosimo.

Giovanni, as we have said, was never a friend to the "New Learning," although he insisted on his sons receiving every advantage in their education that might accrue from it.[2] Amid all his democratism there was in his nature a subtle strain of intellectual and religious conservatism, which preferred the "mediæval" and the "known" to the "modern" and the "unknown": "I am too old an oak to have my branches bent in new directions," he once remarked, when Palla degli Strozzi rallied him over his lack of interest in the Renaissance.

Giovanni's life accordingly was devoted to business. He laid the foundations deep and wide of that colossal banking connection which Cosimo was still further to extend. To him, as we have seen, wealth meant power, and the resources he so laboriously accumulated were of invaluable assistance to his sons in their duel to the death with the Albizzi. In his dying charge to his sons he said—

"Nothing makes my death so easy and quiet to me as the thought that I have been so far from injuring or disobliging

[1] Cf. Machiavelli, *History of Florence*, bk. iv.: "Because in the Books of Assessment every man's goods were rated" (which the Florentines call Accatastare). This imposition was called Catasto.

[2] Yet when rebuilding the church of San Lorenzo he chose Brunelleschi's design, in which all the qualities of Renaissance architecture are present in rich measure.

any person that I have done them all the good offices I was able. The same course I recommend to you. For matter of office and government, if you would live happy and secure, my advice is that you only accept what the laws and the people confer upon you: that will create you neither envy nor danger; for 'tis not what is given that makes men odious, but what is usurped, and you will always find a greater number of those who, encroaching upon other people's interests, ruin their own at last, and in the meantime live in perpetual disquiet. By these arts, among so many factions and enemies, I have not only preserved but augmented my reputation in the city. If you follow my example you may maintain and increase yours. But if neither my example nor persuasion can keep you from other ways your ends will be no happier than several others who in my memory have destroyed both themselves and their families."[1]

And Machiavelli goes on to say—

"Not long after he died, and was infinitely lamented by the greatest part of the city, as indeed his good qualities deserved, for he was charitable to the height, not only relieving such as asked him, but preventing the modesty of such as he thought poor, and supplying them without it. He loved all people: the good he commended, the bad he commiserated. He sought no office, and went through them all. He was a lover of peace and an enemy of war. He relieved those that were in adversity, and those who were in prosperity he assisted. He was no friend to public extortion, and yet a great augmenter of common stock; courteous in all his employments; not very eloquent, but solid and judicious. His complexion appeared melancholy, but in company he was pleasant and facetious. He died rich, especially in love and reputation."

Verily, he must have been no ordinary man to have

[1] Machiavelli, *History of Florence*, bk. iv.

elicited such eulogy from Niccolò Machiavelli, from whose pen blame ever flowed more readily than praise, and whose antagonism to the Medici is matter of history.

Cosimo de' Medici, who succeeded his father in 1429 as "chief" of the "house," though inheriting some of his parent's traits and adopting several of his principles, was of a nature essentially different. The ideals, both in morals and politics, followed by him were entirely distinct from those pursued by Giovanni. The bent he impressed on the Medicean policy was not only "different"; it was, ethically speaking, less straightforward. In fact, had his devotion to letters and to culture not purified his aims Cosimo would probably have followed in the footsteps of the least noble of the Italian despots. The fact that he was pledged to the fostering of the "New Learning" and of the Renaissance spirit safeguarded him in a general way from the worst excesses into which the oligarchs of his age were so apt to fall. The more thoroughly the trend of the Medicean policy became known, both as regards the Renaissance and popular institutions as a whole, the more difficult it became for Cosimo to deviate from that narrow path which the exigencies of his position as a "democratic" in contradistinction to an "oligarchic" patron of learning marked out for him.

His aim was not directed towards raising the status of the family from that of Florentine merchant princes. Rather did he seek to render the position of a Florentine merchant prince of itself equal to a patent of nobility. He taught his successors to entertain the same views. Only after Italy had become the battle-

ground for the greater European powers, and when one by one the despots of the Italian Republics had found that craft and cunning were no longer of avail against the big battalions of France and Spain, did the later Medici consent to destroy the fiction of freedom left to the Florentine Republic, and to become Grand Dukes of Tuscany in place of unofficial "Chief Magistrates" of the city. Strange was the hold they possessed on that community. To accept any position, save a seat on the board of the "Monte Commune," or National Debt of the Republic, or at times a place on the "Dieci" or Council for controlling Foreign and Military Affairs, they steadily refused. What Miss Ewart says of Cosimo may be taken as applicable to the whole family: "Cosimo had no official position which could enable him to apply effective coercion in any branch of the administration, . . . yet throughout his life he was practically absolute in all matters about which he chose to exert his authority."[1]

In a word, Cosimo de' Medici was the initiator of the policy, whereof Lorenzo was the perfecter, which for 140 years, with but inconsiderable intervals, was to influence the relations of the house of Medici to the Florentine Republic. The dying injunctions of his father he read rather in the letter than in the spirit. While never assuming political office, contrary to the will or voice of the people, he had no scruples about "assisting" that "voice" to come to a decision in accordance with his interests.

If we contrast the policy of the Medici with that of their great rivals the Albizzi, also a family warmly

[1] *Cosimo de' Medici*, by K. Dorothea Ewart. "Foreign Statesmen Series."

favourable to the Renaissance, we see how essentially the two plans differed. Yet at first there was not much to choose between them. During the last two decades of the fourteenth century and the first three of the fifteenth the Albizzi pursued a line of action closely analogous, in outline at least, to that of their future opponents. But their system was clumsiness itself compared with the consummate astuteness of the methods practised by Cosimo and Lorenzo. The Albizzi had neither the thoroughness nor the patience indispensable to successful political plotters; the Medici, on the contrary, would wait a lifetime to secure a favourable moment for the complete realisation of an idea. Witness the case in point of the substitution of the Milanese alliance for that Venetian one which had been traditional in Florentine diplomacy for nearly a century. As early as 1439 Cosimo resolved on the change, but he did not succeed in carrying it into actual achievement until the Treaty of Lodi in 1455.

Much of the popularity of the Medici in connection with the Renaissance, as also much of their power to influence their fellow-men, arose from their apt social opportunism. They could be all things to all men in order to secure their support. In this species of statecraft Lorenzo stood *facile princeps*. But it is to Cosimo rather than to Lorenzo that Machiavelli pays the somewhat doubtful compliment of admiration as the master-plotter of the Renaissance epoch. His was the policy which made Florence what it became in the days of his grandson; his the attitude of mind towards the Renaissance which all his family in turn adopted. The profound ability of the man has never really been

estimated at its true valuation. Greater as an intellectual force though his grandson Lorenzo undoubtedly was—for Cosimo made pretensions to no rank in scholarship beyond the humblest—as a statesman he was one of the ablest Italy has ever produced. In several of his political ideas he anticipated the theories of later thinkers, notably Mazzini and Cavour.

In nothing, however, was his keenness of prevision more markedly manifested than in foreseeing the part the Renaissance was to play in Italian politics. He was only a youth when he came to the conclusion that the "Revival of Letters" was not to be a provincial but a European movement; and having once realised that fact, he decided to foster the new spirit with all the powers which in him lay.

Taking their cue from him, his successors undeviatingly adopted the same course. Perhaps this may have occasioned the idea which some writers have entertained, that the work of Cosimo and Lorenzo is alone worthy of study in connection with the great movement. Such a survey lacks both breadth and completeness. If the influence of the Medici in promoting the development of the Renaissance is to be correctly estimated, both as regards its value and its results, we must allow our intellectual gaze to sweep from the age of Giovanni, the great-grandfather of Lorenzo the Magnificent, not only to that of Pope Leo X., the son of the latter, but even as far as the pontificate of his nephew, Giulio, otherwise Clement VII. By so doing we secure a convenient conspectus of the entire relations of the Medici with the Renaissance, in Rome as well as in Florence. Nor was the glory of the Roman eventide of Medicean culture-patronage so

ery much less splendid than its Florentine dawn. If he achievements of Bruni and Traversari, of Poliziano nd Ficino, were great, assuredly they did not much urpass those of Bembo and Sadoleto, of Castiglione, f Aleander, and the other members of the Roman cademy.

What strikes one most forcibly in critically studying his question is the continuity as well as the uniformity f the influence exercised by the Medici. Practically, lement VII. was inspired by the same aims as his reat-granduncle Cosimo and his cousin Leo, namely, o base his claims to regard upon his services to letters, otwithstanding the fact that he was the outward and isible Head of the Catholic Church. Fate, however, as too strong for him, and the timid Humanist Pope, hose province it should have been to comment on icero or Plato, or to lecture on the antiquities of ome, was forced into the arena of diplomacy, for hich his irresolution and vacillation rendered him as nfitted as any man could well be. Had his lot been ast in less troublous times he would have left his ark on his age as a learned pontiff whose services to tters were worthy of his race.

Clement, however, wrecked himself and his country y his instability. He attempted to play the *rôle* of osimo and Lorenzo, and to hold the "Balance of ower" in the Italian peninsula in his own hand. But e lacked their iron determination of purpose, and hen his enemies grew too strong for him, coquetted ow with Francis I., now with the Emperor Charles V. efore his election to the chair of St. Peter, he had id that if ever he were called to occupy that re- ponsible position he would mould his policy towards

letters and diplomacy by that of Cosimo and Lorenzo. To bend the bow of Ulysses, however, demanded the hand of the hero himself. The result of Clement's attempt to imitate Cosimo and Lorenzo in holding the "Balance of Power" in Italy was to invoke upon the Eternal City the horrors of the Sack of Rome and the consequent extinction of the Italian Renaissance.

The policy of the Medici, therefore, was directed towards rendering Italy subservient to Florence—in other words, to themselves, by skilfully holding the "Balance of Power" between Milan, Venice, Naples, and the Papacy. The party favoured by the Tuscan Republic naturally proved the stronger when it had the Medicean wealth and political genius on its side.

CHAPTER III

Cosimo de' Medici—The Florentine Foster-Father of the Renaissance, 1389–1464

Section 1.—*The Intellectual Seedtime: Early Progress of the Movement*

Popes—Boniface ix., 1389; Benedict xiii., Anti-pope; Innocent vii., 1404; Gregory xii., 1406; Alexander v., 1409; John xxiii., 1410

Giovanni de' Medici took care that his two sons Cosimo and Lorenzo should receive the best educational training the age permitted. Though by no means a scholar, the old man was not unversed in letters and art. Poggio [1] assures us he was an admirer of Giotto's works and was the patron of Della Robbia, while he esteemed Dante as a man sent from God to enlighten the world.

Giovanni, as has been said, was a staunch Medievalist in sympathies and cast of mind, and therefore was not directly associated with the Renaissance movement. His own prejudices, however, did not prevent him furnishing his sons with teachers who were imbued with the new spirit of culture.

From an early age Cosimo was brought under the influence of that mysterious glamour cast by the "New

[1] *Poggii Epistolæ*, lib. i. 72.

Learning" upon all who came within the radius of its spell. The hunger of its votaries was stimulated by what they fed on. Never did mortal maid who had once tasted the fruits of *Goblin Market* long more insatiably for the juicy harvest which "that unknown orchard bore" [1] than did the early students of the new culture for the latest results of the researches in connection with the Renaissance. For us to-day, after Europe has had experience for nearly five centuries of the liberalising effects of classic culture, to realise the entrancing delight as well as the subtle intoxication produced in the minds of the early Italian Humanists on being introduced to the mighty masterpieces of Hellenic genius, is next to impossible. To that frame of mind, only to be likened to the wonderment of children confronted with some of the marvels of creation, the world can never revert. To do so we should have to pass through a prior state of profound intellectual darkness and barbarism. The conditions under which society is now constituted preclude the possibility of such a reversion. Granted that in the past there have been cycles of advanced civilisation and culture, in some respects at least rivalling the glories of our own—to wit, those of India, China, Egypt, and Greece — which were followed and their memory obliterated by succeeding eras of ignorance, such results were due either to the civilisation not having been sufficiently widely diffused, or because it had not penetrated sufficiently deep into the social texture.

Two safeguards exist among us to-day, rendering impossible such a recrudescence of barbarism and ignorance as characterised the Dark Ages. These are

[1] *Goblin Market*, by Christina Rossetti.

the world-wide diffusion of learning consequent on the invention of printing, whereby four centuries have achieved greater intellectual progress than was accomplished in the fifty preceding ones, dating from the grey dawn of Nippur to the transitory glories of the Italian Republics; and, second, the facility afforded for travel and migration from hemisphere to hemisphere by the application of steam to land and marine transport. In point of relative accessibility alone, the world has contracted by at least twice its own diameter since the days when the journey to India from Continental Europe occupied, by the overland caravan route, nearly a year; or when, after the Cape had been rounded by Vasco da Gama, six months were regarded as a marvellously rapid trip to Goa.

Cosimo de' Medici was only in his eighth year when Manuel Chrysoloras was induced to accept the new Chair of Greek in the University of Florence. It is characteristic of the cast of mind of Giovanni de' Medici that he stood altogether aloof from this scheme. The Medici therefore can claim no share in the credit of introducing the study of Greek into Florence. That was due to Coluccio Salutato, Palla degli Strozzi, and Niccoló Niccoli. In the year 1396, during the pontificate of Boniface IX., the Byzantine Emperor Palaeologus, even then sorely pressed by the Turkish Sultan Bajazet, who had just defeated the Emperor Sigismund at Nicopolis, sent a deputation to Europe to implore aid against this common danger. The deputies were of high rank and fame, namely, Manuel, or Emanuel, Chrysoloras, reputed to be the most erudite Hellenist of his age, and Demetrius Kydonios, a recognised authority on Greek architecture and art.

The illustrious strangers found they could effect little owing to internal jealousies in Italy. They landed at Venice, but their reception, although courteous, was sufficient to show that their journey had been taken in vain. They were about to return, therefore, when they were agreeably surprised by the arrival of two noble Florentines, Roberto de' Rossi and Giacomo d'Angelo da Scarperia, with greetings from the Tuscan Republic. Intelligence had just arrived that for the moment the siege of Constantinople was relaxed, owing to Bajazet's own dominions being attacked by his future conqueror, Tamerlane. After a pleasant meeting the deputies took leave of the Florentines, when Scarperia suddenly decided to accompany them to Byzantium. Roberto de' Rossi therefore returned alone to Florence, so filled with admiration of the wonderful culture of Chrysoloras that, as Symonds puts it, "he awoke a passionate desire in Palla degli Strozzi and Niccoló de' Niccoli to bring the great Hellenist in person to Florence."

Their representations to the Signory led that body to set apart a yearly sum of 150 golden florins, afterwards increased to 250, for the maintenance of a Greek Chair in the University. Manuel Chrysoloras accepted the invitation to be its occupant. At his opening lecture, the enthusiasm for the new study was so great that the teacher is said to have shed tears of joy that after so many centuries of neglect the Greek language should once more be so honoured in Italy. Among that audience were Coluccio Salutato, Niccoló de' Niccoli, Palla degli Strozzi, Roberto de' Rossi, Poggio Bracciolini, Lionardo Bruni, Francesco Barbaro, Giannozzo Manetti, Carlo Marsuppini (Aretino), Ambrogio

Traversari, and many others of the leading scholars in Florence. Of that company, in all likelihood, Cosimo formed one, young though he was. The learned rejoiced that Greek would now take its place beside Latin as of old. The latter language was well cultivated at this time in Italy, and particularly in Florence.[1] Since Petrarch gave that historic impulse to the more accurate and more scientific study of Latin, several great teachers had arisen, whose scholars at the close of the fourteenth century were in the majority of cases amongst the leading citizens in the States where they dwelt. John of Ravenna (Giovanni da Ravenna) was one of the first and the greatest, whose merit consisted, as Bruni testified, in his unique faculty of arousing a passion for pure literature, and especially for the study of Cicero. His pupils numbered amongst them such notable Humanists as Francesco Barbaro, Filelfo, Guarino da Verona and Vittorino da Feltre—the two great teachers of the next age; Ognibene da Vicenza, Pier Paolo Vergerio, Strozzi, Poggio, Bruni, Traversari, and Marsuppini. Luigi Marsigli was another early teacher who instructed by disputation. That is to say, after his lectures on Virgil, Cicero, and Seneca, he set forth a series of propositions arising immediately out of the topics of which he had been treating, and expected his students to discuss the alternative points whether the conclusions he drew should or should not be accepted. His influence was very great. Although but a monk in

[1] See Vespasiano, *Vite d'Uomini Illustri*, p. 271, who says of Strozzi's share in securing Chrysoloras: "There being in Florence exceeding good knowledge of Latin letters, but of Greek none, he resolved that this defect should be remedied, and therefore did all he could to make Manuel Chrisoloras visit Italy, using all his influence thereto, and paying a large portion of the expenses incurred."

the Augustinian monastery of San Spirito in Florence, students came to him from all parts of Italy. Amongst his pupils were Salutato, Rossi, Niccoli, and Manetti.[1]

In Latin, Cosimo received tuition from the best teachers of the day. Guarino da Verona was certainly his instructor for a time, while Coluccio Salutato, Niccoló Niccoli, Luigi Marsigli, Giacomo da Scarperia, and other cultured men and excellent Latinists assisted in forming his tastes on many important points. Cosimo accordingly became a man of wide culture and great intellectual force, though never what could be termed a scholar. The remark which Ficino made regarding him affords us an inkling of the severe economisation of his time which the great banker habitually practised: "Midas was not more sparing of his money than Cosimo of his moments."[2]

From boyhood he manifested a keen delight in study, and by sedulously improving the moments others allowed to slip by unperceived he was able to keep abreast of all the great movements of his epoch. As early as the age of fifteen he is reported to have said: "The man who has no pleasure in study has not tasted one of the chief delights in life." On one occasion, says his biographer, his father had presented him with a very costly jewel. A few days afterwards Giovanni was surprised to see it on the person of one of his son's friends. On making inquiries he discovered that Cosimo had actually sold it to procure a rare MS. Accordingly, when he returned home he asked his son for the ring. The latter, without a

[1] Gasparino di Barziza was another early teacher of note, whose forte lay in epistolary Latinity.

[2] *Epistles of Ficino*, i. 1.

moment's hesitation, proceeded to his room and, bringing the MS. to his father, placed it in his hands. "There, father," he said, "there is the jewel,—only, I have increased its lustre. One can buy another ring any day, but you do not get the offer of a MS. like this but once in a lifetime." Needless to say, the father was so satisfied with this evidence of his son's devotion to learning that he repurchased the ring for him.

All Cosimo's instincts therefore, from his earliest years, being scholarly, it is no surprise to find that in after life his patronage of Humanism and Humanists was at once princely yet discriminating. Though he cannot be classed with either his grandson Lorenzo or his great-grandson Leo x., who were not merely patrons of Humanism but distinguished Humanists themselves, the fact must be remembered that he was the great financial genius of the family, as Lorenzo was "the perfect flower" of its intellectual development. Giovanni it was who laid the foundations of Medicean financial prosperity, strong, broad, and deep. To Cosimo was due the credit of having raised by the force of his genius the superstructure on that foundation which was to place the name of the Florentine Medici at the very head of the great bankers in the world. Cosimo's achievements in finance, in politics, and in diplomacy were quite as worthy of praise in their own way, as were Lorenzo's culture and poetic genius and Leo the Tenth's encyclopedic accomplishments. Owing to his eminence in finance and diplomacy, we are apt to lose sight of the fact that Cosimo was in reality a man of great and varied culture. Fabronius, Ficino, and Politian all agree in characterising his acquirements as much more than

mediocre, in an epoch when the standard even of mediocrity was, comparatively speaking at least, very high.

Thanks to the stimulating influence of Salutato, Cosimo was no sooner free from scholastic tutelage than he threw himself into the acquisition of general culture. Though at fifteen he had served in the Pisan campaign, not without credit to himself, his heart was never at home in the camp. He was emphatically a man of peace. He therefore returned from the pomp and circumstance of war to the quiet pursuits of letters.

Cosimo was essentially a son of the Renaissance, at the same time that he was its Florentine foster-parent. Paradoxical though it may sound, the statement is no more than truth. His whole intellectual nature was moulded by the New Learning, and the process was going on at the very time he was doing his utmost to encourage scholars to persevere in their quest after the treasures of letters. He was among the earliest of the younger men to recognise the fact that Humanism, in order to achieve its perfect end, must be free. As a young man all his efforts were directed towards relaxing the hold of the Church upon the keys of the gates of knowledge. One of his sayings in youth is recorded in the letters of Traversari: "If St. Peter," he said, "is to keep the keys of the road to the tree of knowledge as well as those of the gates of Heaven and Hell, from past experience, nine-tenths of us would prefer to go to Beelzebub at the beginning, in place of having to do so at the end." A remark such as this, made by one who all his life was professedly in friendly relations with the Papacy, shows the contempt entertained for it as a spiritual force.

Cosimo was still very young when his father, noting his ability, and assured as he doubtless was by the results of the Pisan campaign that his son would never shine as a soldier, became impatient for him to enter the banking-house. Cosimo accordingly was compelled to leave his books for the time being and take his place at the desk. Thenceforward for some years to come, his studies were devoted rather to "life" than to letters.

Young though he was when he took farewell of his teachers, Cosimo was old enough to realise that the age of mediæval Scholasticism which for four centuries had prevailed in Europe had reached its terminal point, and that the hope of the future lay in that nascent principle in letters to which men had assigned the somewhat vague designation "the New Learning." Although Scholasticism did not in reality receive its deathblow until Reuchlin's controversy with Hochstrâten over Pfefferkorn's attacks on Hebrew literature had provoked the most scathing of all the Reformation satires, the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*, that system of intellectual slavery was already yielding to the determined attacks made upon it by the early Humanists. Cosimo, whose sympathies were all, of course, with the advocates of the "New Learning," recognised what his father, owing to his spiritual and intellectual limitations, failed to recognise, that the trend of the tendency of the age in the direction of the emancipation of the human intellect was a movement to be fostered, not frowned upon. What the father deplored the son defended, because he saw in the emancipation a new means of extending the influence of his house

over the great mass of the people. The Albizzi were at that time supreme in Florence. They were carrying all things as they chose. The Medici were therefore obliged to conceal their political sympathies if they would live in peace. Cosimo, almost ere his school-days were over, was thus obliged to learn the lesson of political dissimulation. So, too, it came to pass that he was known as a munificent patron of the Renaissance long before he took any overt part in politics calculated to identify him with the interests of any faction in the State. The study of Greek was then taking firm hold in Florence. As a necessary consequence the classical spirit was being diffused throughout the community. Young and old were vying with each other which would show the greater interest in Hellenic literature. Even in the first decade of the fifteenth century Coluccio Salutato could write, "The man who does not profess to feel, if he does not feel in reality, a delight in the classics is looked upon as a sort of *rara avis*." Manuel Chrysoloras had done his work well; he had laid the foundations of the love of Hellenic learning broad and deep in the artistic temperament of the Florentines.

Section 2.—*The Progress of the Renaissance in Florence during Cosimo's Early Manhood*

Popes—Alexander v., 1409; John xxiii., 1410; Martin v., 1417

Cosimo de' Medici was only seventeen when he received responsible charge of one of the most important departments in his father's banking-house—that concerned with foreign agencies and correspondents. No position could have been assigned him

where he would find fuller opportunity of gratifying his Renaissance tastes.

The first two decades of the fifteenth century witnessed a wonderful development in the progress of the Renaissance. Until the close of the fourteenth century, learning, which had been under the domination of Scholasticism, had been largely the province, almost the prerogative, of the clergy,—a province and a prerogative in many cases so jealously guarded that monkish students, looking askance at such an anomaly as a lettered layman, began to sniff for heresy. Italy, however, accepted the fact of lay culture long before the rest of Europe, and Cosimo had no inconsiderable share in breaking the fetters which bound learning to the cloister. He was amongst the first to realise the value of the *studii pubblici*, or high-schools, whereby the people were enabled to prosecute their studies in the coveted "New Learning," along with those whose wealth placed the means in their own hands.

The state of Italian culture during the first two decades of the fifteenth century may be summed up in a few words. It was a period of germination, an era of intellectual awakening. The dormant genius of the Italian race was arousing itself after its long slumber to a consciousness of its destiny. Intense interest was displayed in all relating to antiquity —its literature, its art, its architecture, its philosophy. To Constantinople all eyes were turned, because there the men were resident whose delight still centred in that language wherein were enshrined those literary glories that were Greece. Since Petrarch and Boccaccio had first preached to their fellow-men the doctrine that true culture lay in a revival of

interest in the literatures of Greece and Rome, eage
anxiety had prevailed first to obtain good Greek
teachers, and next an adequate supply of those MSS
containing the writings of the great classic authors
As regards the first desideratum, learned Greeks
as soon as they heard that there was a demand for
their services as teachers, began to flock over to
Italy, and Chrysoloras was followed by Gemisthus
Pletho,[1] Georgios Trapezuntios, Theodore of Gaza, and
many others. The supply of Greek MSS. was a more
difficult problem, and was only solved by enthusiastic
scholars like Scarperia, Aurispa, Filelfo, and Guarino
proceeding to Constantinople, whence they returned
after learning the language, laden with codices where-
with they enlightened all Italy.

To afford some idea of the number of these price-
less texts introduced into Italy, we may state that
Aurispa, when he arrived from Byzantium in 1423
brought back 238 MSS., many of them the works
of authors absolutely unknown at that time to
Western scholars. Filelfo possessed 230 MSS. when
he returned; while Guarino, although reported to
have lost a large part of his store by shipwreck on the
voyage home—a misfortune which, according to current
tradition, whitened his locks ere middle life was reached
—was yet able to save over 200 of them.[2] To most
of these Cosimo extended help,[3] with a generosity

[1] Gemisthus Pletho came from the Morea, where he resided, to take
part in the Union of the Eastern and Western Churches at the Council
of Ferrara-Florence, and remained in Italy a few years thereafter.

[2] Cf. Didot, *Alde Manuce*, and Vespasiano's *Lives*.

[3] Even to Filelfo, although that irascible pedant mendaciously denied
it and would only admit receiving his travelling expenses from Lionardo
Giustiniani.

haracteristic of the time, when the mere reputation f Humanistic learning was sufficient to ensure honours often denied to the nobility. The remarks of Symonds n this point are admirable—

"Considering the special advantages enjoyed by the three cholars who were pupils of the learned Manuel Chrysoloras, and before whose eager curiosity the libraries of Byzantium remained open through nearly half a century previous o the fall of the Greek Empire, we have good reason to elieve that the greater part of Attic and Alexandrian literature nown to the later Greeks was transferred to Italy."

Nor were Latin MSS. less eagerly sought for than Greek. Poggio's herculean labours in MS. hunting mongst the convents and abbeys of St. Gall and its eighbourhood, when he was acting as Papal Secretary t the Council of Constance (1414)—labours whereof nore shall be said anon, but regarding which we may tate here that they resulted in the recovery of many aluable texts, as those of Quintilian, Tertullian, and thers,—these labours, we repeat, have placed the vorld of letters under an everlasting obligation to im. Other workers also were in the field who were ittle less indefatigable, such as Nicholas of Treves, vho, after despatching valuable MSS. to Florence, was ble in 1428 to forward to Rome the most complete opy of Plautus then known. Bartolommeo di Montelulciano, working upon Poggio's tracks after the latter ad left, succeeded in discovering the lost writings of Vegetius and Pompeius Festus. In 1409 Lionardo Bruni made a happy discovery at Pistoia of a good IS. of Cicero's *Letters*, while in 1425 Gherardo andriani unearthed in the Duomo at Lodi, Cicero's

rhetorical treatises. The enthusiasm over intaglios, engraved gems, coins, inscriptions, marbles, and vases, which George Eliot,[1] when recording the introduction of Tito Melema to the burghers of Florence, describes as characteristic of them even at the last decade of the fifteenth century, was doubly true in the opening decades of the same century.

"Never was there a time in the world's history when money was spent more freely upon the collection and preservation of MSS., and when a more complete machinery was put in motion for the sake of securing library treasures. Prince vied with prince, and eminent burgher with burgher in buying books. The commercial correspondents of the Medici, whose banks and discount offices extended over Europe and the Levant, were instructed to purchase relics of antiquity without any regard to cost, and to forward them to Florence. The most acceptable present that could be sent to a king was a copy of a Roman historian."[2]

All classes, well-nigh every age and sex, were infected with the enthusiasm. Everything else was considered of no account compared with the priceless privilege of learning Greek. Even the stately Lionardo Bruni, Chancellor of Florence, could write—

"When Chrysoloras of Byzantium brought Greek learning to us I was at that time pursuing the civil law, though by no means neglecting other studies; for it was my nature to love learning with ardour, nor had I devoted slight pains to rhetoric and dialectic. Therefore at the coming of Chrysoloras I was brought to a pause in my determination regarding a profession. I held it wrong to desert law, yet I reckoned

[1] *Romola*, bk. i. chaps. iv. and v.
[2] Symonds, *Renaissance*, vol. ii. p. 101.

t a crime to omit so great an occasion of learning the Greek iterature; . . . can it be that thou wilt desert thyself and neglect the opportunity divinely offered thee, I asked myself. Through seven hundred years no one in all Italy has been master of Greek letters, and yet we acknowledge that all science is derived from them. Of civil law, indeed, there are n every city scores of doctors; but should this single and unique teacher of Greek be removed thou wilt find no one o instruct thee. Conquered at last by these reasonings, I delivered myself over to Chrysoloras, with such passion that what I had received from him by day in hours of waking occupied my mind at night in hours of sleep."[1]

The enthusiasm for the acquisition of culture, which gradually infected all Italy, and Florence in particular, may be likened to the excitement that followed the preaching of the First Crusade by Peter the Hermit. Men really accounted all worldly things as loss when compared with the possession of that culture which promised intellectual riches so rare.

Cosimo, as we have seen, shared the enthusiasm almost from the time when he realised what that culture actually implied. In early youth he was indefatigable in its acquisition, and when in his twenty-third year he engaged on his own account in extensive mercantile and financial speculations in the Levant, Africa, Syria, Greece, and Asia Minor, which resulted in enormous gains to himself and the "house," he was able at the same time to advance the cause of the Renaissance by commissioning his agents and correspondents to secure for him rare MSS., intaglios, pieces of sculpture, gems—in a word, all those priceless memorials of antiquity which made the Palazzo

[1] Muratori Collection, vol. xix. p. 920.

Medici in the Via Larga and the Villa Careggi, after their treasures had been added to by the cultured taste of Lorenzo the Magnificent, the boasts of Florence.

Cosimo's energies in those earlier years were not all directed towards foreign fields. For example, the notorious Cardinal Balthazar Cossa,—in youth a Levantine pirate stained with well-nigh every crime possible to humanity, in manhood a priest because that station enabled him to gratify his bestial desires with the greatest freedom, in age a Pope with the title of John XXIII., and as "Head of the Church" as well as "God's Vicar on Earth" guilty of excesses which shocked even the loose-laced papal secretaries,—noting the outstanding ability of the young financier, had made him his private banker. So well did Cosimo acquit himself in this difficult position that, when the Pope was compelled to attend the Council of Constance, he chose to be accompanied (says Roscoe) by Cosimo de' Medici, amongst other men of eminence, whose characters might countenance his cause.

"By this Council, which continued in session nearly four years, Balthazar was deprived of his pontifical dignity, and Otto Colonna, who took the name Martin v., was in 1417 elected Pope. Divested of his authority and pursued by his numerous adversaries, Balthazar endeavoured to save himself by flight. Cosimo did not desert in adversity the man to whom he had attached himself in prosperity. At the expense of a large sum of money he redeemed him from the hands of the Duke of Bavaria, who had seized on his person; and afterwards gave him a hospitable shelter at Florence during the remainder of his life."[1]

We mention this fact to prove that Cosimo, notwith-

[1] Roscoe, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. 53.

standing his policy of interested generosity, was not above doing a thoroughly disinterested action out of gratitude for the manifold benefits he had formerly received from the deposed pontiff. He must, of course, have been aware his conduct would produce a favourable impression on certain of the great Italian families with whom the Cossas, although then in the winter of their fortunes, were still closely allied. Sixteen years afterwards the bread cast upon the waters was to return to him. When exiled from Florence by the Albizzi in 1433, the noble Venetian family of the Donati, kinsmen of the Cossas, influenced their State to offer an asylum in their city to the illustrious refugee. The fact is somewhat curious that Venice should have received one of her earliest aids to the fuller acquisition of Renaissance culture, in return for this deed of kindly courtesy. Cosimo founded a library in Venice in the Monastery of St. George, which he enriched with many rare MSS. and presented to the Republic as a memorial of his gratitude.

Cosimo's interest in the Renaissance began when he was a boy, increased when he was a lad, and became a passion in manhood. Of course, he was not without tricks to stimulate his emulation. Though loving learning for its own sake, he found it to his advantage, in both a commercial and a political sense, to appear to the world as one of the leading Florentine patrons of letters. His enemies and political rivals, Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Palla degli Strozzi—both of them twenty years older than he—had posed as Tuscan Mæcenases for fully a decade and a half before he appeared on the scene. Rinaldo himself was no mean scholar, and he employed one of the

greatest men of the age, Tommaso da Sarzana,[1] as tutor to his children. Palla degli Strozzi was the wealthiest man in Florence.[2] His services to the cause of learning during the years between 1395 and 1434, when he was banished, are worthy of all praise. He it was who brought the great Latinist, Giovanni da Ravenna, to Florence; who secured the Chancellorship of Florence for Salutato, the peerless Latin stylist of his time; who, as we have seen, was largely instrumental in inducing Chrysoloras to occupy the chair of Greek, and who spent immense sums in getting editions of the classics copied to facilitate Hellenic studies. Vespasiano says regarding him—

"Being passionately fond of literature, Messer Palla always kept copyists in his own house and outside of it, of the best who were in Florence, both for Greek and Latin books; and all the books he could find he purchased on all subjects, being minded to form a most noble (public) library in Santa Trinitâ."[3]

He was, in fact, the first to conceive the idea of a public library, though his great rival Cosimo, after he had succeeded in ruining Palla, was the one destined to carry the project into effect.

These were the men with whom Cosimo had to contend in a rivalry that would have been honourable and productive of immense good but for the paltry Medicean jealousy. Cosimo felt himself clearly outclassed in moral nobility of character. He had to substitute craft for courage, and chicanery for straightforward-

[1] Afterwards Pope Nicholas v.

[2] He was wealthier even than Giovanni de' Medici, for in the *catasto* —a sort of tax on wealth—his property was set down at one-fifth more than that of the Medici.

[3] *Biographies*, p. 275.

ness in his dealings with them. True, the fact cannot be denied that Rinaldo degli Albizzi, when he felt himself being defeated by Cosimo's underhand schemes, resorted to weapons of a like character. But nothing of the kind has ever been alleged against Messer Palla. He lived and died one of the truest patriots and noblest souls Italy ever produced. For many years the emulation of these men, the chief patrons of Florentine scholarship, letters, and art, achieved the happiest results for the germinating Renaissance spirit. From 1400 to 1430 their influence was all directed towards rendering the Tuscan capital the centre, as it had already been the source, of Italian culture.

Cosimo, as we have said, impressed himself on the minds of his fellow-citizens as the munificent Mæcenas of the Revival of Letters before revealing himself as the political Richelieu of his generation. Although compelled in his earlier years to share a divided throne as regards the patronage of classical learning with Rinaldo and Palla, the brilliancy of what may be termed the Medicean *entourage* was so great as totally to eclipse the merely personal popularity of the others. Such men as Niccoló de' Niccoli, Tommaso Parentucelli of Sarzana (afterwards Pope Nicholas v.), Ambrogio Traversari, Poggio Bracciolini, Lionardo Bruni, Carlo Marsuppini, Gianozzo Manetti — who were the first fruits of the Renaissance culture in Florence — by their wide learning and enthusiasm in the cause of scholarship, shed a lustre over the Medicean patronage of letters which stamped it one of the most powerful influences in advancing the "New Learning."

That early period in Cosimo de' Medici's life, lasting from his birth in 1389 to about 1429–1430, when his

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father died and he was left the controlling power in both the Medicean banking-house and the Medicean party—a period in all of about forty years—was marked by a steady development of all his powers. It was a period, moreover, of incessant industry, both intellectual and political, and of patient strengthening of his family connections. That he worked with skill and secrecy, at least as long as his father lived, is evident from the fact that the Government entertained no dread of his plans, since during the twelve years included between the dates 1416–1428 he was twice a member of the Signory, was employed on embassies to Milan, Lucca, and Bologna, and in 1426 was intrusted *alone* with a mission of importance to Pope Martin v. Coluccio Salutato, who early detected the youth's genius, had predicted that Cosimo would yet be the greatest glory of Florence. The prophecy was fulfilled, but in a way somewhat different from that which the grand old Florentine Chancellor could have believed possible.

His enthusiasm for MSS. and relics of antiquity began almost from boyhood. We have already seen the "standing" order circulated to all the agents and correspondents of his father's bank. Our next view of him reveals him giving a *carte blanche* to Poggio to spare no expense in securing any MSS. while he was in attendance as Papal Secretary at the Council of Constance. Poggio's own means were limited, but with the purse of Cosimo de' Medici behind him he was able to achieve wonders by exploring the dust-covered libraries in the Swiss and Suabian convents. The treasures he unearthed at Reichenau, Weingarten, and above all St. Gall, restored to Italy many lost masterpieces of

Latin literature, and supplied students with the full texts of authors which had hitherto only been known in mutilated fragments. He brought to light at various times, covered with dust and filthy with neglect and age, yet as regards the precious text absolutely intact, the *Institutions* of Quintilian, the works of Lucretius, Columella, Silius Italicus, Manilius, Vitruvius, Frontinus, several of the missing books of Cicero, a portion of the *Argonautica* of Flaccus, and the *Commentaries* of Asconius Pedianus, Ammianus Marcellinus, Nonius Marcellus, Probus, Tertullian, Flavius Caper, and Eutyches. By no means a bad record for a single Humanist to achieve! But Poggio's zeal really did not recognise as difficulties what to other men, troubled with that inconvenient piece of luggage—a conscience, would have been obstacles insuperable. For example, when the monastery at Hersfeld refused either to lend or even to allow him to copy its rare codex of Livy, he quietly bribed one of the holy brethren to steal the MS. for him, which he copied and returned—then published, to the no small chagrin of all concerned, the story of the trick he had played.[1] Cosimo allowed him to make a copy of all the MSS. he secured for his patron. Thus he acquired what was regarded as a large library, even in the days before the discovery of printing. With Pope Martin v. (1417–1431) Cosimo was on intimate terms, and received a leading share of the papal banking business, while he was also able to influence that stern old pontiff to allow some crumbs of favour to fall to the promoters of the "New Learning."

Even while a young man Cosimo preferred the

[1] Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums*, p. 138.

society of Humanists to that of all other companions. In a succeeding chapter we shall detail specifically the friendships he formed and the pursuits he favoured during his long and active life. Meantime, suffice it to say that during those earlier years, whether he chanced to be a visitor at Luigi Marsigli's cell at San Spirito; whether he was discussing with the grave and stately Lionardo Bruni the antiquities of Italy or Greece at the Chancellary of the Florentine Republic; whether debating the respective merits of Platonism and Christianity with the taciturn and melancholy Marsuppini; rejoicing over the latest discoveries of MSS. with the indefatigable collector, Niccoló de Niccoli, in his villa on the banks of the Arno; or hearing that faithful son of the Church, Ambrogio Traversari, reading some of his translations from the Greek Fathers in his study in the Convent degli Angeli, Cosimo was always the same courteous, sympathetic, though somewhat reserved, companion,—a better listener than a conversationalist, but a keen critic when any fallacy was committed. With the Signory his influence was always freely exercised to obtain privileges for the "New Learning"; and if the State treasury were low he was ever ready to make good from his own purse any deficiency in the sums voted for the encouragement of letters. Cosimo early realised his responsibilities as regards the Renaissance, and however much we may condemn him in other respects, however much we may feel that, in a political sense, he played only to suit his own hand, as regards the Revival of Letters, there can only be one opinion —that he acted throughout as a disinterested and public-spirited patron.

Section 3.—*From Giovanni's Death until the Date of Cosimo's Exile*

Popes—Martin v., 1417; Eugenius, 1431

When Cosimo de' Medici assumed the family honours in 1429–1430, Europe was a seething cauldron of social and political unrest. Martin v., whom the Council of Constance had elected Pope in room of the deposed John xxiii., was nearing the end of a pontificate wherein, despite numerous errors in judgment, he had restored the monarchical authority of the Papacy, subjugated the College of Cardinals to his will, and once more laid the foundation of the princely power of the Sacred Chair. His attitude towards the Renaissance was at first indifference, then veiled antagonism. To Cosimo he accorded some privileges on behalf of the "New Learning," but they were so slight as to be scarce worthy of mention.

The Visconti were still masters of Milan. The wars, however, had commenced between that State on the one hand, and Venice, Florence, and occasionally the Papacy on the other,—wars destined to end in placing the Sforzas in the ducal chair of the Visconti. Naples and the two Sicilies were convulsed over the question of succession—whether Alfonso v. of Aragon or Louis iii. of Anjou should be the chosen heir. Eastern Europe was aflame over the Hussite revolt. The adherents of the martyred John Huss, having set Bohemia on fire with indignation over the "judicial murder" of their leader and Jerome of Prague at the Council of Constance, were now advancing into Hungary to kindle their sympathisers there into the

same blaze of religious wrath. The Turks, repulsed from Constantinople in 1422, were again threatening the city.[1] Even in Rome there was so much anarchy that Martin left for a time the banks of the Tiber for the banks of the Arno.

Not that Florence itself was much more tranquil at that juncture. The policy of the Albizzi was to withdraw the attention of the citizens from home affairs by a spirited foreign policy. Maso, the leader of the faction, had waged a long duel with the Visconti of Milan. When his son Rinaldo succeeded him in 1417, he in turn sought to conceal his oligarchic methods of managing the civic affairs, by engaging the Republic, professedly in consequence of treaty obligations with Venice, in a tedious and unsuccessful war with Filippo Maria Visconti, which cost 350,000 golden florins, and brought with it no credit. To meet these extraordinary expenses he had to raise new public loans, thereby depreciating the value of the old Florentine funds. Thereafter he proposed to impose on the people that crushing system of municipal taxation that brought Giovanni de' Medici into the political arena to champion the cause of the masses, and to initiate that campaign which was to end, some years afterwards, in the ruin of the Albizzi.

Scarcely had Cosimo assumed the honours of the family than events tended to foster the conviction in the minds of the citizens that war *à l'outrance* would soon be declared between him and Rinaldo. After 1431–1432 the fact became every day more apparent.

[1] Cf. Gregorovius, bk. viii. cap. i.; Jakob. Burkard, *Diarum*; Blondus, *Decades*, iii. lib. iv. 460.

Both sides were secretly preparing for the trial of strength.

"An oligarchy proper (that is, a State where power is confined to a wealthy minority) is subject to the danger that wealth is a more fluid element than family. Its distribution between class and class, between one group of houses and another, may shift with extreme rapidity. . . . The immediate issue between Rinaldo and Cosimo was the control of the chief magistracy, the Signoria, for with this lay the power to force the Opposition from the State. Rinaldo was reserved and stingy. Cosimo was popular, and he won supporters by paying their arrears of taxes, and thus replacing them on the roll of citizens." [1]

Cosimo was too clever a tactician not to use the Renaissance and his connection with it to strengthen his position in this deadly contest. Since becoming the head of the family his interest in the welfare and development of the "New Learning" had materially increased, and by all possible expedients he sought to win the Humanists to his side. From this time henceforward Cosimo's public life ran in two grooves, quite distinct from each other yet mutually complementary. These were his political and his Humanistic planes of action. His enormous wealth enabled him to lend money to the State on easy terms. Besides, he took care always to have floating foreign capital beside him, so that there was no delay needed to satisfy the civic wants. Whatever the sacrifice to himself, he always saw to it that the burghers had no time for second thoughts with regard to the contracting of State debts. By means of his numerous agents and

[1] Armstrong, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. 16.

correspondents he was also able to keep his own wealth invested far beyond the reach of any of his enemies within the city. By pursuing this policy for some years, he was able to effect such complete intermixture between the finances of Florence and his own trade resources that the bankruptcy of the Medici, should it by any malign influence have been brought about, would have meant the State insolvency of the Republic as well. He was also very ready to lend needy burghers money to tide them over their difficulties, with a sort of tacit understanding that they would not be bothered about its repayment if only they consented to support Cosimo in his policy. Thus did he, like the octopus with its prey, cast his tentacles around both the State and its inhabitants.

The great secret of Cosimo's influence lay in his affability and accessibility. He made himself the equal of the poorest. The humblest fruit-seller in the Mercato Vecchio had as ready access to him as the ambassadors from the Courts of Europe who came to borrow money or to get him to finance their wars. He was proud to be considered "only a burgher." He still lived among his fellow-townsmen in the Mercato Vecchio at the end of the Via Larga. "This piazza," says George Eliot, "though it had been the scene of a provision market from time immemorial, and may perhaps, says fond imagination, be the very spot to which the Fesulean ancestors of the Florentines descended from their high fastness to traffic with the rustic population of the valley, had not been shunned as a place of residence by Florentine wealth. In the early decades of the fifteenth century . . . the Medici and other powerful families of the *popolani grassi*, or

commercial nobility, had their houses there, not perhaps finding their ears much offended by the loud roar of mingled dialects, or their eyes much shocked by the butchers' stalls." [1]

The government of Florence, to secure control of which Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Cosimo de' Medici were thus putting forth their supreme efforts, was nominally a Republic, directed by a Signory or Council of Nine Citizens, including a Chief Executive Officer elected every two months, called the Gonfaloniere, or Standard-bearer. This system of government was devised to preserve the full and free exercise of their liberties and institutions to the citizens. The aim of the oligarch, on the other hand, was to ensure that the names in the *Borse*, or boxes whence candidates for the offices of State were drawn, should previously have been so arranged that they contained no names but those of men dependent on or favourable to that party's domination.[2] The "Signory" and the "Gonfaloniere" possessed at once the chief executive power and the right of initiating legislation. Next to these were the two Colleges of the twelve "Buonomini," and the College of the sixteen Gonfaloniere. These two sets of Magistrates held office "three" and "four" months respectively, and with the "Signory" were called the three "Greater Magistracies." A proposal which had received the approval of two-thirds of the Signory, and likewise of a similar proportion of the Colleges, was then brought before the Councils of the "People" and of the "Commune," the former consisting

[1] *Romola*, bk. i. chap. i.

[2] *Florence*, by E. G. Gardner (in Dent & Co.'s "Mediæval Towns Series"), chap. iii.

exclusively of the "Arti," totalling in all about two hundred and fifty members, while the latter contained several nobles, many wealthy merchants, and numbered about three hundred. In both, the higher magistrates of the State had seats *ex officio*, and also the Consuls of the seven "Greater" and the fourteen "Lesser" Arti, while the remainder were chosen in equal proportions from the four quarters of the town.

The principal aim of either party, however, was to secure the control of the election of the Signory or City Council, for thereby all was secured. The Signory was in reality the fountain or springhead of power, whence all the other offices and bodies drew their authority. Its members were chosen by lot, and having once served they were not eligible again for a considerable time. All members of the Arti were legally qualified to hold office. This privilege, however, was limited by the necessity of passing the "Scrutinies." As the object of each Government was to control the making of the "Scrutinies," only the names of citizens well disposed to oligarchs, as we have said, were permitted to pass into the *Borse*.

Two other important "Committees" were the "Pratiche" and the "Dieci." The former consisted of leading men called in by the Signory to give advice and aid on important matters; the latter was a "Council of Ten," into whose hands foreign and military affairs were placed that they might be properly conducted. These facts with reference to the civic government of Florence, although they have no direct connection with the Renaissance, are mentioned because much depended on the triumph of the Medici rather than the Albizzi, whether or not the "Revival

of Letters" was to proceed along the best lines of development. Had Rinaldo degli Albizzi succeeded in crushing Cosimo, his penuriousness would have driven Humanism from Florence.

Cosimo could not but know that the action he was taking in angling for popular support through the Renaissance, was giving deadly offence to the Albizzi. He did not, however, anticipate that the blow would fall on him so soon. He reckoned that the disagreement between Rinaldo, the head of the extreme "wing" of the oligarchic party, and Niccoló da Uzzano, who led the moderate section,—which desired to find some *via media* or *modus vivendi*, whereby the two great houses of Medici and Albizzi might mutually bear and forbear as regards each other's claims to supremacy,—would have prevented Rinaldo taking action for some time.[1] The latter, however, speedily perceived that unless he struck without delay, Cosimo's munificent patronage of letters, his affability and kindly courtesy, would entirely undermine the influence of the Albizzi faction in the minds of the fickle Florentines.

Rinaldo at this moment had lost much of his popularity, owing to the unsuccessful prosecution of the war with Milan and the consequent exhaustion of the Florentine resources. Her finances were in confusion; all the bankers save the Medici refused to lend money upon public credit, and the price of the Monte Commune, or civic debt, fell almost to nothing. The War Commissioners quarrelled with each other, in place of prosecuting the campaign with vigour. In vain Rinaldo went to Siena to treat for peace through the

[1] Cf. Machiavelli's and Prof. Villari's *Histories of Florence*; Von Reumont's *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici.*

Emperor Sigismund, who had arrived in the peninsula to obtain his investiture and the Italian and Imperial Crowns from the Pope; in vain Cosimo and Palla degli Strozzi went to Ferrara to discuss terms between Milan, Venice, and Florence. When in April 1433 a general peace was signed, the conditions were distinctly unfavourable to Florentine interests, and both Albizzi and Medici laid the blame of the failure upon the other.

On returning from Ferrara, Cosimo was called to serve on the "Dieci," or "Council of Ten," for the administration of military and foreign affairs, and gained great reputation for the ability he there displayed. He also came to the assistance of the State, and advanced large sums by which the Republic was enabled to surmount its financial difficulties. All this was gall and wormwood to Rinaldo. Accordingly, after consulting with his friends, he prepared to take action.

On September 7th, 1433, the blow fell. Cosimo had retired to his country-house in the Mugello, but in response to the summons of his friends he returned to Florence. The Gonfaloniere for the succeeding two months was likely to be Bernardo Guadagni, who was in Rinaldo's power, the latter having paid his taxes. This was the tool which the Albizzi determined to employ to crush Cosimo. Rinaldo and his son Ormanno were prepared to stick at nothing to accomplish their ends. They were resolved the struggle should be a duel to the death. Both families could not remain in Florence. On the day in question Cosimo was engaged at his banking-house when he was suddenly summoned to the Palazzo Pubblico. On arriving there, he found the municipal buildings surrounded by armed men, and the Albizzi in command of the situa-

tion. He was immediately denounced as a rebel, the responsibility for all the recent disasters in the Milanese war being laid on his shoulders. He was committed to close ward in the central tower. For four-and-twenty days he remained in suspense, while his rivals were debating what should be done with him. The great bell was sounded, the citizens were summoned to "the Piazza," where a Balia, or Committee of Reform, was selected. Thereafter Cosimo was formally impeached. Fain would Rinaldo have put him to death, and thus, as Machiavelli says, have justified his own policy. But the attitude of the people daunted him, and eventually the sentence was pronounced that Cosimo should be exiled for ten years.[1]

Meantime the unfortunate prisoner was undergoing tortures of anxiety. He dreaded poison, and declined to taste anything save eggs and bread, until his jailor, Federigo Malavolti, who had received many kindnesses from him in the past, reassured him by declaring he would partake of every dish along with him. Nor were his friends idle meantime. Owing to their representations several of the Italian States interfered on his behalf. His brother Lorenzo, taking with him Cosimo's children, had fled to Venice and informed the chief men in the Venetian Republic of the imminent peril wherein the head of the house of Medici then stood. Immediately the great family of the Donati,[2] the relatives of the deposed Pope, John XXIII. (Cardinal Balthazar Cossa), recalling the disinterested services rendered by Cosimo to their kinsman, urged the Govern-

[1] Cf. *Cosimo de' Medici*, p. 25, by Dorothea Ewart; Machiavelli, bk. iv.

[2] Blood relations of the Florentine Donati, to which family Dante's wife belonged.

ment of Venice to champion his cause. This they agreed to do, and straightway despatched three ambassadors to Florence on the mission. The Marquis of Ferrara and Pope Eugenius IV. likewise intervened. Rinaldo, although personally he contended that Cosimo would never cease to be a source of danger unless he were put to death, gave way before the representations of Palla degli Strozzi and others, that they would do their cause more harm than good by unnecessary bloodshed. He was therefore led to sentence Cosimo to banishment in place of death, and, as Machiavelli says, by sparing his rival's life Rinaldo sealed the ruin of his own family.

On departing from his native city to begin his term of exile Cosimo became at once a hero. His journey northward resembled the triumphal progress of some great conqueror. As Symonds pithily puts it, "he left Florence a simple burgher; he entered Venice a powerful prince." There is in politics a seeming defeat that is in reality a victory. Such was the result of the first act in the deadly drama that was being enacted by the Albizzi and the Medici.

In the Humanistic and politically neutral circles in Florence—in other words, among those whom the Albizzi either despised on account of their weakness or left unmolested owing to their wide family connections—intense indignation had been expressed over the treatment meted out to Cosimo. The broad and practical sympathy he displayed with the intellectual, artistic, and spiritual movements of the age was remembered with admiration, despite the foul slanders of Filelfo. He had been a scholar among scholars, an antiquary among antiquaries, a philosopher among philosophers,

an admirer of the poets among poets. While other Humanist patrons deemed it fashionable to sneer at Italian vernacular literature, Cosimo defended it. The remark to which he gave expression the year before his exile, "The day is not far distant when Dante will rank with Homer and Virgil as one of the great classics of the world," showed the depth of his sympathy with everything Italian, as well as the keenness of his prevision. Even by political opponents like Palla degli Strozzi, the treatment to which Cosimo had been subjected was condemned. To his intense chagrin, Rinaldo found Cosimo tenfold more popular after his exile than before, while all that the Albizzi had been able to effect by their long contemplated *coup* was to turn against them the sympathies of the "New Learning." Of this fact Rinaldo was soon made aware, by being pelted daily with mercilessly satirical epigrams, whose effect was to cover him and his party with ridicule, yet whose authors he failed to discover.

The reason of this was that Rinaldo,[1] although a professed patron of the Renaissance, was more lavish in benevolent good wishes than of his money. Cosimo, on the other hand, although his political and commercial plans were conceived on a scale so vast as to excite the wonder even of later ages, nevertheless found time to continue the Humanistic studies of his earlier years, and to manifest an ever deepening interest in the progress and extension of the Renaissance. He set apart princely sums for the copying of rare MSS.; he reiterated once and again his advices to his agents and correspondents all over Europe and the Levant that

[1] Maso degli Albizzi was a much more generous patron of letters than his son, whose avarice was proverbial in Florence.

all relics of antiquity, irrespective of cost, were to be secured for him; while to the early Humanists themselves he acted the part of a discerning and munificent Mæcenas. To his purse the possession of learning was an unfailing "Open Sesame." He educated many youths of promise, while no poor scholar ever applied to him for assistance in vain. If the petitioner were fitted for the work, he employed him in his corps of copyists; if not, he assisted him pecuniarily until he was able either to obtain tutorial work for him in some noble family, or public teaching in connection with the *studii pubblici* (high-schools). It was this genuinely earnest desire to foster the spirit of culture and the growth of sound scholarship that first gave Cosimo his hold on the intellectual classes in the city. Of all the Tuscan Humanists, Filelfo alone sided with the Albizzi, and his action was determined by spleen.

Of the other Florentine Humanists of Cosimo's epoch we shall speak in the next section, but of Filelfo it may be well to state here what we have to say about him; as by the time Cosimo returned in triumph from exile, this indiscreet scholar had been obliged to take refuge elsewhere. Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481) was undoubtedly one of the greatest of the earlier Humanists, and, as Schaff pithily remarks, "was both much admired and much hated by his contemporaries."[1] Born at Tolentino in the March of Ancona, he pursued his studies at the University of Padua with a success so brilliant that he was appointed to a professorial chair there at the age of eighteen. In the following

[1] *The Renaissance*, by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons).

year, having received an invitation to teach "Eloquence and Moral Philosophy" at Venice, he migrated thither and remained two years, profiting by the society and the advice of Guarino da Verona and Vittorino da Feltre — the two greatest Humanistic instructors of the fifteenth century. Even at this period Filelfo's learning was esteemed extraordinary. Admitted a citizen of the Venetian Republic by public decree—of itself no small tribute to his eminence—he soon after received an offer of the secretaryship to the "Baily,' or Consul-General of Venice at Constantinople He had been anxious to proceed thither to study Greek. The way was thus opened for him to do so For nearly eight years he was absent. After studying under the celebrated John Chrysoloras, whose daughter the beautiful Theodora, he subsequently married through his father-in-law's influence he was taken into the service of the Emperor, John Palaeologus. Created a "Counsellor" by the latter, he was at once employed on important diplomatic missions for his imperial master. He was sent, for example, to Sigismund, Emperor of Germany, at Buda-Pesth, and to Cracow, on the occasion of the marriage of King Ladislas of Naples, to recite an epithalamial oration. He was also despatched by the Venetian "Baily" to the Court of the Sultan Amurath II. to negotiate the terms of a treaty between the Republic and the Turks.

Longing at length to see his native land, and learning too the estimation in which learning was held there, he returned to Italy in 1427, on the invitation of the Venetian Signory, and was installed in his former Chair of Eloquence, but at an increased salary of 500 sequins. He was not destined to hold the post for any long

period. The plague broke out there, the nobles and the leading citizens fled, and no one was left to attend his lectures. To Bologna, therefore, he next repaired, only to experience there a similar disappointment from the like cause. At last a flattering invitation reached him from Florence, and in 1429 he began his prelections there as "professor of Eloquence and of Greek." At first he was delighted with his reception. His vanity was tickled by the wonder his vast learning aroused among audiences comprising representatives of well-nigh all classes in the community. In one of his letters he writes: "The whole State is turned to look at me. All men love and honour me, and praise me to the skies. My name is on every lip. Not only the leaders of the city, but women also of the noblest birth, make way for me, paying me so much respect that I am ashamed of their worship. My audience numbers every day 400 persons, mostly men advanced in years and of the dignity of senators." [1]

These were Filelfo's happiest days. His inordinate conceit and haughty contempt for the ideas and feelings of others, had not yet become so pronounced as to arouse the dislike of other Humanists. Besides, the Florentine *literati* were at first prepared to overlook much and make generous allowances for the weaknesses of a scholar, who had returned from Constantinople laden with rare MSS., whose contents he was only too ready to make the public property of those attending his lectures. When, however, his arrogance rose to such a height that he boasted no man living but himself had mastered the whole literature of the ancients in both languages; that no one else could

[1] Rosmini's *Vita di Filelfo*, p. 59.

wield with equal facility the prose of Cicero, the verse of Horace and of Virgil, and the Greek of Homer and of Xenophon; nay, when he went a step further and declared that he himself surpassed Virgil because he was an orator, and Cicero because he was a poet, and both of them because he could write Greek as well as Latin, the patience of even the learning-loving Florentines became exhausted. First he quarrelled with Niccoló de Niccoli, then with Carlo Marsuppini, Ambrogio Traversari, and the whole Medicean faction, including Cosimo. As they were the friends who had brought him to Florence, his conduct was impolitic in the extreme.

Even his enemies, however, admitted his stupendous learning and his ceaseless industry. Here is the record of an early Humanist teacher's working day. He began the day by reading and explaining the "Tusculan Disputations" and the rhetorical treatises of Cicero; then he proceeded to Livy and Homer. After a brief rest at midday he resumed his labours with Terence and a Greek author, Thucydides or Xenophon. On holidays he read Dante to an audience assembled in the Duomo, bestowing these lectures as a gift on the people of Florence. Yet while engrossed with public labours so manifold, he found time to translate two speeches of Lysias, the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, two *Lives* of Plutarch, and Xenophon's panegyrics on Agesilaus and the institutions of Sparta, as well as to engage in public controversies with many of the leading men, not alone in Florence but throughout Italy.

The manner of conducting these literary duels fills one to-day with profound amazement, not unmingled with disgust. Personalities the most offensive, insinua-

tions the most hideous, as well as charges of crimes the most loathsome, were freely hurled against an adversary; while the vocabulary of abuse was ransacked for terms that would present that opponent in the most disadvantageous light. That the charges should contain a single scintilla of truth was not requisite. Proof was neither asked nor given on either side. Satires, epigrams, dialogues were circulated wholesale, whose sole aim was by every possible means to heap insult on an adversary. No sooner did Poggio, Papal Secretary in Rome, hear that his Medicean friends were assailed, than he also rushed into the arena and belaboured Filelfo with satiric effusions, which for wit, sarcasm, filthy abuse, and utter contempt for all the canons of truth were fully on a par with his own. This war of words between these two literary gladiators was protracted over several years, while all Italy looked on and applauded the combatants.

But Filelfo took a false step when he allied himself with the Albizzi. So intense was his dislike to Cosimo de' Medici and his circle that in the great political duel between the families, notwithstanding the kindness he had received from Cosimo on his arrival in Florence, he actually went the length of urging Rinaldo to put his rival to death if he desired in the future to live and rule in quietness. Such a piece of advice was not soon forgotten by the Medicean faction. Florence was not so completely under the heel of the Albizzi as Filelfo had hoped. Cosimo's misfortunes crowned him with the halo of political martyrdom. His sufferings begat sympathy, while his faction was instant in season and out of season in working for his restoration.

Exactly one year subsequent to the pronouncing of the sentence of banishment against Cosimo, a Signory favourable to the Medici attained office, and Rinaldo degli Albizzi was in his turn summoned to the Palazzo Pubblico and declared a rebel. After a fruitless attempt to arouse the people to rebellion, an attempt which only served to reveal to him his own unpopularity, Rinaldo was compelled to listen to that sentence of banishment pronounced against himself, which twelve months before he had heard with such satisfaction proclaimed against his rival. Cosimo was now formally recalled. After passing through Padua, Ferrara, and Modena, where he was accorded honours only granted to a prince returning from a victorious expedition, Cosimo entered Florence on the 6th October 1434, being publicly hailed by the people and the Government alike as "the patriot whom the Republic delighted to honour."

During his stay in Venice Cosimo, as has been already stated, showed his appreciation of the asylum granted him, by forming a library in the Monastery of St. George, which he enriched with many rare MSS. and left to the Venetian burghers as a monument of their generous kindness and of his gratitude.[1] Though exiled from home, and without any assurance he would ever see the banks of the Arno again, he never demitted his literary studies or the pursuit of those branches of "the New Learning" which he had made his own. In fact, as Fabronius[2] informs us, he found a consolation in the prosecution of them which soothed his ruffled mind and frequently led him to lay aside plans of

[1] Vasari, i. 339; Roscoe, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, chap. i. p. 57.

[2] *In Vita Cosmi.*

revenge upon his fellow-citizens, which, had they been carried into effect, would have alienated from him that sympathy which his dignified acceptance of the situation gradually aroused. During his stay in Venice Cosimo received several visits from his faithful friend, Ambrogio Traversari, a monk of the Camaldolese monastery near Florence, and one of the most learned and cultured men of his age. From the letters of Traversari, still extant, we note that Cosimo bore his misfortunes with calm heroism, expressing on every occasion an intense love for his native place, with a desire to benefit it as much as possible.[1] His banishment and the anxiety of this period materially changed Cosimo's character. By suffering he learned nobility and generosity of soul.

As far as his further connection with Florence was concerned, the return of Cosimo meant the total cessation of all Filelfo's relations, either official or private, with the university or even with the city. He retired to Siena, where he did not cease his vile attacks on the Medicean circle, but where, however, he continued to receive from the bitter pen of Poggio as severe chastisement as he meted out. After four years' stay there he transferred himself to Bologna; thence, at the invitation of Filippo Maria Visconti, to Milan, which remained his headquarters until almost the year of his death, though he paid long visits to Naples, to Ferrara, to Mantua, and to Rome. Notwithstanding his bitter quarrel with the Medici, he was ultimately reconciled to Cosimo's grandson Lorenzo, and died at the age of eighty-three, when about to commence the duties of the chair of Greek Literature in the University of

[1] Traversari, *Epistles*, bk. viii. ep. 53.

Florence (1481). He lies buried in the Church of the Annunciata in that city.

Symonds regards Filelfo as the typical Humanist of his age. The universality of his acquirements and the impression they made upon contemporaries were certainly very great. He had a highly receptive intellect, coupled with a prodigious memory, and these stood him in good stead. His contemporaries realised that he had mastered the entire circle of the learning of the ancient world, that he was able to explain its mysteries, and to catch some stray gleams at least of its glory. A genius he assuredly was not! Of profound thought, true taste, penetrative criticism, or delicate fancy he knew nothing. His service to his age was to act as a sort of "importing agent" for ancient literature. He brought to the knowledge of his contemporaries the works of authors, both Latin and Greek, of whose writings, in nine cases out of ten, they had never heard, or if they had heard of them, only as an empty name. The mass of his editorial work was very great, as he translated several Greek authors into Latin and a few of the more obscure Latin writers into Italian. His original work, consisting mostly of satires, epigrams, and a colossal Latin epic, the *Sforziad*,[1] is often so obscene as to be incapable of being read without disgust, while intellectually it is so feeble as to be beneath contempt. The venomous scurrility to which he descended made him feared, while the belief that his satires were assured of im-

[1] Which, however, was unfinished, although it reached 14,000 lines. It was an attempt to celebrate in heroic verse the achievements of Francesco Sforza, who, having married Bianca, the natural daughter of Filippo Visconti, succeeded him as despot or Duke of Milan.

perishable popularity caused many to submit to his insolence to escape an infamous notoriety, as they thought, in his "eternal" verse! Several of the leading Italian despots, and more than one crowned head, were content to submit to this Humanistic "blackmail," on condition of being lauded not lampooned in "Filelfo's deathless numbers." Such an action brought its own punishment. Many of them lived to see Filelfo and his verse the butt of the satirists of the succeeding age, when Poliziano, Landino, and Bembo had created a standard of taste and of Latinity which rendered Filelfo's sprawling numbers "barbaric" in every sense of the term. He *was* a typical Humanist!

Section 4.—*From his Exile until the Treaty of Lodi*

Pope—Eugenius iv., 1431; Nicholas v., 1447; Calixtus, 1455

Cosimo's return to Florence implied, of course, the predominance of the Medicean faction in the State. From 1434 to 1436 he was busy formulating and perfecting that political system by which in the course of a few years he was able to rule Florence as absolutely as any of the avowed despots of other Italian towns. Though he seldom assumed public office, though he never allowed his interference with civic procedure to become visible, none the less no item of State business was henceforth transacted without his knowledge. By 1436, when Cosimo and Francesco Sforza, the famous Condottiere,—the son-in-law,[1] the opponent, and the successor of Filippo

[1] He married the natural daughter of the Duke, as we have seen, although he commanded the troops of the Republic against his father-in-law both before and after that alliance.

Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, — cemented their alliance, the subjection of the Florentine Republic was beginning; by 1441, after the victory of Anghiari and the Peace of Cavriana, concluded between Milan, Florence, and Venice, it was complete. Henceforward Cosimo's friends or nominees—the Pucci, the Pitti, the Salviati, Diotisalvi Neroni, Agnolo Acciaiuoli, and others—were the holders of all the official posts in connection with the management of public affairs. "Government by cat's-paw" was instituted without a dissentient voice, and for over twenty years was to be the political régime of Florence. So perfect was the machinery, so keen and constant the supervision exercised by Cosimo himself, and so faithful the agents he employed to fulfil his orders that, in his lifetime at least, no hitch occurred, and Cosimo was left to spin his political webs undisturbed.

In the fifteenth century Venice, to use a familiar banking term, was the commercial "clearing-house" of the world. Thither representatives of all nations flocked, certain of meeting some of their own people there. Filelfo's remark in one of his "Satires," that a stranger standing on the Rialto, and listening to the languages spoken on all sides of him, might be pardoned for supposing he had been transported back to the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, was scarcely an exaggeration. As the mart where the Eastern and Western worlds met, Venice attracted to her a population more cosmopolitan than local.

During his stay in Venice Cosimo had been a keen as well as a close observer of the men and manners of the society whereinto his lot was cast. He noted the increasing interest with which, even at that early

period, not Italy alone but Europe as well was beginning to regard the progress of the Renaissance. From exile, therefore, he returned with the firm conviction that the Revival of Letters was destined to become a movement of greater magnitude than either he or any of the other patrons of letters in Italy had calculated. Formerly he had entertained the belief that the Renaissance might prove only another of those literary "fashions," fated, like so many ephemeral "modes," to disappear and be forgotten. When, however, in addition to Venice, he had visited Ferrara, Padua, Modena, and had seen that the "depth" as well as the "breadth" of the enthusiasm wherewith the study of literature was regarded, was not less there than in Florence, he began to realise that he was assisting in the furtherance of a movement, destined to influence the history of the world, to a degree hitherto unprecedented.

His life subsequent to his return from exile was directed along lines different altogether from those previously affected by him. Hitherto, underrating the radius of its influence, he had used the Renaissance to assist his political ends. He soon realised his mistake. His residence in other cities showed him that he was using the greater influence to advance the less. Therefore after his return, and when his political power was consolidated, he employed it for the advancement of the Renaissance, in place of utilising the latter for the extension of his civic rule. Moreover, he gauged the future of the movement much more accurately than many of his contemporaries. While they were arguing that it was and would remain a purely Italian outgrowth—nay, even

were jealous of any extension of its benefits to the other countries—Cosimo, in one of his letters, stigmatises the idea as selfish and provincial, adding, "You might as well try to control the stars in their courses or the sea in its tides as to bind the Renaissance to the soil of Italy. It is a European perhaps a world-wide influence."[1]

Meantime the cultured and pacific but weakly vacillating Eugenius IV. (Cardinal Orsini) had succeeded the stern old autocrat Martin V. The new Pope, ere long, was not only at war with his predecessor's kinsmen, the Colonnas, over certain appanages of the patrimony of St. Peter, alienated by Martin to enrich his relatives, but he was at enmity with the citizens of Rome itself. Wearied by the ceaseless hostilities which devastated the surrounding country, without in the slightest degree concerning them, the burghers of the Eternal City put an end to the temporal power for the time being, and proclaimed a Republic. Eugenius thereupon fled to Florence and besought the protection of that State. To grant it, and to welcome the pontiff to the banks of the Arno, were among the last actions of Rinaldo degli Albizzi before his exile. Henceforward Eugenius abode in Florence, while his militant legate, Giovanni Vitelleschi, with ruthless severity, suppressed all opposition to the Holy See throughout the Papal dominions.

Eugenius was at first a friend and supporter of Rinaldo, and did not scruple to show it. On a Signory hostile to the latter being elected, which by a new Balia revoked the sentence of exile against Cosimo, Eugenius pledged his word to secure his

[1] Gregorovius, bk. xiii. cap. i.

friend's immunity from banishment if he would lay down his arms. Even the powerful papal protection, however, could not avert the sentence. Rinaldo, the scholarly and munificent Palla degli Strozzi, and certain others of the "Ottimati," were exiled from their native city, never to return.[1]

But the banishment of his friend did not prevent Eugenius from forming a close intimacy with Cosimo de' Medici. The Pope had a pet scheme for achieving a Union between the Eastern and the Western Churches. Since his accession to the papal chair he had been eagerly working for that end, and of late, owing to the dire extremities to which the Byzantine Empire and Church were reduced by the activity of the Turks, with a fair prospect of success. Such a Union, he argued, would reconstitute the Papacy on the basis of its Apostolic and Constantinian constitution, when the See of Rome was the "eye of the entire Christian Church."

The idea at first glance seems not only a noble one but reasonably feasible. Did it not imply simply a reversion to earlier conditions of Church government, and if achieved would it not for ever have silenced the taunts of the Mohammedans and others, who pointed with derision to the divisions among the followers of the so-called "Son of God"? But, on looking deeper, the differences were found to be not only doctrinal and ritual, but also racial and political. The elements comprising the Eastern Church were exceedingly composite in character. There was a

[1] Cf. Strozzi, *Lettere d'una Gentildonna Fiorentina del Secolo xv. ai figliuoli esulo;* and *Documenti di Storia Italiana—Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi.*

large Asiatic admixture, and the Emperor of Constantinople was in some respects head both of Church and State.[1] When the matter came to be examined the differences between the two communions were found greatly to outnumber the similarities. Eugenius, however, was not to be daunted. He wished to secure as one of his advocates the eloquent Ambrogio Traversari, of the Camaldolese Monastery, Florence, a leading member of the Medicean circle, and, as we have already seen, one of the most distinguished of the Renaissance scholars. To obtain the help of Traversari he had first to win over Cosimo; hence the rapidity wherewith he formed his new relations with the latter, almost before his former ones with Rinaldo were broken off. But, in the troubled state of Italy at the time, it was politic, to say the least, to be on friendly terms with the banker-ruler of Florence.

Though, as we see from contemporary testimony,[2] Cosimo appraised at its true value the sudden friendship of the pontiff, yet he found it convenient to humour him. He never trusted his policy, though he revered the private character of the man, and his prevision was justified when Eugenius some years after deserted the alliance of Venice and Florence for that of Alfonso of Naples and Filippo Maria Visconti of Milan. The immediate end, however, of the Pope was gained. He declared himself a friend of the "New Learning"; the word accordingly was passed round that Eugenius was to receive all possible assistance from the Medicean party in realising his scheme.

[1] See Oman's admirable work, *The Byzantine Empire.*

[2] *Letters of Traversari.*

Cosimo was not so short-sighted a diplomatist to concede this favour without a *quid pro quo*. Florence and Venice were then fighting with Filippo Visconti of Milan. The Pope, though hitherto a staunch supporter of the Florentino-Venetian alliance, had, through his legate Vitelleschi, been recently manifesting a desire to coquette with Piccinino, the Milanese general. Cosimo therefore felt that if he could induce Eugenius to prorogue the Council from Ferrara—where it was even then assembling—to Florence, a great proof would be given to the world of the unity of interests characterising the Papacy and Florence.

Eugenius consented, on the grounds, first, that the plague had broken out in Ferrara; and, second, that Florence would prove more convenient as a meeting-place for their Eastern visitors. Cosimo accordingly prepared to play the host for the whole of Florence. The holding of this Œcumenical Council on the banks of the Arno in the year 1439 marks an epoch in the history of the Renaissance. The Byzantine emperor, John Palaeologus VI., in company with his brother Demetrius, the aged Patriarch Joseph, and the Bishops Marcus Eugenikos of Ephesus, Isidore of Russia, Bessarion of Nicæa (afterwards Cardinal in the Western Church and a notable Humanist), the great Platonist Gemisthus Pletho, and many others of note both for learning and piety, came from Ferrara in the train of the Pope.[1] To assert that these Eastern visitors were at all enthusiastic on the subject of Union is a distortion of the facts. They yielded to dire necessity, in the hope that their concessions would enlist the

[1] Machiavelli, *History of Florence*, bk. v.; Gino Capponi, *Storia della Republica di Firenze.*

help of the Western Powers against the Turks. Machiavelli with his grim humour says—

"Though it was derogatory to the emperor, and contrary to the pride of his prelates, to yield in anything to the Romans, yet the Turks lying heavy upon them, and fearing that of themselves they might not be able to resist them, that they might with the more confidence and security desire relief from other people, they resolved to comply with the Pope's conditions."

Gregorovius relates with much sympathetic pathos the trials of the luckless Byzantines—

"After tedious disputes the Byzantine theologians, in fear, not of St. Peter but of Mohammed, laid down those arms which Photius and his successors had borne for more than five hundred years. On June 3 they acknowledged that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and the Son; that the body of Christ was transmuted into leavened as well as unleavened bread; that the souls of believers were cleansed in purgatory, while those of unpenitent sinners went straight to hell. . . . These childish dogmas only veiled the real basis of the great schism. This was the absolute supremacy of the Pope, a principle which, as well as the entire Gregorian-Thomistic system of Western papal authority, the Greeks detested. They despised the fabrications of the pseudo-Isidorian Decretals; their conscience revolted at the thought of conceiving the 'Roman patriarch' as monarch and ruler of the bishops; but in the extremity of despair they at length pronounced the Pope the representative of Christ and chief Head of the entire Church."[1]

Florence treated the strangers right royally. Cosimo

[1] Gregorovius, vol. vii. pt. i.; Pichler, *Geschichte der kirchlichen Trennung zwischen dem Orient und Occident*, i. 253.

was a magnificent host, and the representatives of the Eastern Church returned to Constantinople deeply impressed by the splendid generosity of the great banker-statesman. He had also shown himself in his most attractive moods, as the cultured Renaissance patron, whose studies had been pursued sufficiently far to enable him to detect a true Hellenic scholar from a sciolist. Then the treasures of his exquisite villa at Careggi, as well as those of the Palazzo Medici in the Via Larga, were exhibited before them until Gemisthus Pletho lifted up his hands and cried: "If Hellenism dies in Byzantium it will live again in Florence."[1]

The effect, however, produced on the Florentines by these mysterious "hierophants" of a dying cause, was even greater than the reciprocal influence exercised by the citizens on their visitors. The flower of Hellenic culture was now before the learning-loving citizens of the Tuscan Republic. In Bessarion, but more especially in Bessarion's teacher and friend Gemisthus, they beheld a Platonist who, if more Neo-Platonic than Platonic in his system, yet retained enough of the pure gospel of him of Academe to unfold to the wondering gaze of the Medicean circle, and the scholarly section of the Florentine citizens, the marvels of the philosophy of Grecian Idealism. The Florentines were just then in the first flush of their passion for the study of Greek. Plato was worshipped as an unknown sun whose rising would dispel the mists of Scholastic philosophy. Regarding this, Symonds incisively says: "Men were thirsting for the philosophy that had the charm of poetry, that delighted the imagination while

[1] Voigt, pp. 202–204; Enea Sylvio, i. 91–99.

it fortified the understanding, and that lent its glamour to the dreams and yearnings of a youthful age."[1]

Gemisthus was deeply read in all varieties of mysticism—Platonic, Pythagorean, and Alexandrian, and to the Florentines he poured forth his treasures of Grecian philosophic learning with no niggard hand. When Filelfo had been amongst them eight or ten years before, they had at first almost worshipped the man, until his arrogance rendered him contemptible. Here, however, was a genuine Greek scholar, more learned even in some respects than Filelfo, gifted with the eloquence of the gods, and besides, as humble as Filelfo was self-sufficient. Little wonder, then, that in Florence, and more particularly by the Medicean circle, he was treated with a reverential affection that caused him during the remainder of his life to say, "Florence is the Athens of modern Europe."[2]

He found there the same delight in antiquity as was cherished by himself. Nor was that delight the sentiment only of the few. Since the days of Manuel Chrysoloras, thanks to the intelligent cultivation of the "New Learning" by Palla degli Strozzi, Coluccio de' Salutato, Lionardo Bruni, Poggio, Marsuppini, Gianozzo Manetti, Ambrogio Traversari, and others, in conjunction with Cosimo's princely munificence in everything where a diffusion of the benefits of culture was concerned, few indeed were the schemes for the advancement of learning which, if not initiated in Florence, did not look to the Tuscan Republic for help in carrying them out. The band of scholars who at

[1] Symonds, *Renaissance*, vol. ii. p. 149; Æneas Sylvius, *Comment.*, pp. 180–185.

[2] Poggio, *De Varietate Fortunæ.*

that time claimed Florence as their "Mother City," whether by birth or by adoption, included the names of several of the most brilliant men in Italy. Almost without exception they belonged to the Medicean circle. Soon after his return from exile Cosimo set himself to enlarge his villa of Careggi, situated about four miles from Florence, and to enrich it with those treasures of antiquity he had been able to acquire. Both here and at the Medicean palace in the Via Larga he entertained at an open board, to which they were always made welcome, all the leading Florentine scholars of his age, as well as any wandering *illuminati* who chanced to visit the city. To all he was the princely patron. Once establish relations of friendship with Cosimo, and he was thereafter to be relied upon under all circumstances. Many of the Humanists could never have supported themselves had it not been for his bounty,—as witness the case of Thomas of Sarzana, afterwards Nicholas v. Apart from his personal interest in the Renaissance, the individual interest he showed in each of the great Florentine scholars was one of the methods whereby he influenced his age and fostered the Renaissance.

Each of these Florentine scholars left his mark upon the epoch wherein he flourished. Not one of them but has paid the highest of tributes to Cosimo's munificent patronage. Nay, in the case of his opponents and enemies, even when condemning the selfishness of his "home" and the dangers of his "foreign" policy, they have in nearly every instance, added, in the words of Rinaldo degli Albizzi himself, some such testimony as this: "As a patron of the 'New Learning' he largely made Florentine scholarship what it became."

A case in point will serve to exemplify this. Among the Florentine Humanists there was none for whom Cosimo entertained a warmer esteem than Niccoló de' Niccoli.[1] Dr. Schaff styles him Cosimo's "literary minister," while Miss Dorothea Ewart applies the happier epithet to him, "Florentine Minister for Literature and Education." Though twenty-five years older than Cosimo, he became first the director of his studies and then his most intimate friend. Born in 1364, and dying in 1437, his life accordingly covers the seed-time of the Renaissance. Than he, no one was a more diligent or discriminating sower of the precious seeds of culture. Stimulated by the example of his teacher Marsigli, he devoted himself from early years to the study, first of such Latin classics as were then available, and then to the Greek. In the Hellenic language and literature, however, he never became so great a proficient as in Latin, but despite this fact he was an indefatigable collector of all relics of antiquity. The fact is to be regretted that he wrote nothing, as his exquisite critical taste and wide learning would have qualified him to speak with authority on many subjects. His extreme fastidiousness and despair at realising his own ideal in composition, prevented him, as Poggio and Traversari inform us, from contributing aught to Renaissance literature. He was the greatest living authority on MSS. (says Van Dyk), with an infallible eye for an old codex. He never married, because he knew that if he had a wife he must give up collecting books. But he consoled himself over his

[1] Cf. *Life* by Vespasiano; Poggio's *Funeral Oration* on him; also Van Dyk's *Renascence*, p. 126; Dorothea Ewart's *Cosimo de' Medici*, p. 219; Dr. Philip Schaff's *Renaissance*, p. 34.

celibacy by forming out of his moderate income the best library in Florence—800 MSS., all rare, some of them unique, and many copied in his own exquisitely clear caligraphy.

Cosimo was fortunately able to assist him without hurting the peppery old gentleman's pride. Though inheriting a considerable patrimony, Niccoló had expended it all, long before his death, in the purchase of books and MSS. "If he heard of any book" (says Vespasiano) "in Greek or Latin, not to be had in Florence, he spared no cost in getting it; the number of the Latin books which Florence owes entirely to his generosity cannot be reckoned." On the fact becoming known to Cosimo that Niccoli was practically penniless, he sent for the old man and made the following proposal to him,—that he would be allowed to draw upon the Medicean bank for any sum he pleased, provided that at his death, he left his library to a body of trustees on behoof of the Florentine Republic. By this means Cosimo was enabled to help the old scholar without offending his independence.

During his life Niccoli had virtually made his library a public institution by throwing its treasures open, with rare generosity, to all who chose to go there to read. In some instances he even lent out the books as well. When the bequest became available the trustees found that Niccoli had contracted some debts which were secured upon the library. These "liens" Cosimo undertook to discharge if the books were made over to him. To this the other trustees cordially assented. The great Humanist, Bishop Tommaso Parentucelli—afterwards Nicholas v.—drew up a catalogue of the volumes, after which Cosimo appropriately

housed them in the building known as "the Library of San Marco," in the conventual establishment of that name.[1]

The critical judgment of Niccoli was so keen and refined that by universal consent he was regarded in Florence as its literary dictator, to whom men like Lionardo Bruni were glad to submit their works for revision. His house was filled with objects of antiquarian interest which he had gathered from all parts of Italy and Greece — marbles, vases, inscriptions, statuary, coins, and engraved gems; and nothing delighted him more than to expatiate on them to the youth of Florence.

Vespasiano's picture of the grand old Humanist is so lifelike that we cannot do better than give it here, using the admirable translation of Symonds—

"First of all, he was of a most fair presence; lively, for a smile was ever on his lips; and very pleasant in his talk. He wore clothes of the fairest crimson cloth down to the ground. He never married, in order that he might not be impeded in his studies. A housekeeper provided for his daily needs. He was above all men the most cleanly in eating, as also in all other things. When he sat at table he ate from fair antique vases; and in like manner all his table was covered with porcelain and other vessels of great beauty. The cup from which he drank was of crystal or of some other precious stone. To see him at table—a perfect model of the men of old—was of a truth a charming sight. He always willed that the napkins set before him should be of the whitest, as well as all the linen. Some might wonder at the

[1] This collection, along with that presented by Cosimo to the Convent of Fiesole, and his own private library, constitute the oldest portion of the present Laurentian Library in Florence.

many vases he possessed, to whom I would answer that things of that sort were neither so highly valued then nor so much regarded as they have become since; and Niccoló, having friends everywhere, anyone who wished to do him a pleasure would send him marble statues, or antique vases, carvings, inscriptions, pictures from the hands of distinguished masters, and Mosaic tablets."

Niccoló de' Niccoli's special services to the Renaissance consisted in the encouragement he extended to such teachers as Chrysoloras, Guarino, Aurispa, and Filelfo to visit Florence and lecture on the classical texts; also in generously making all scholars free of his library and collection of antiques. His moral life, however, was far from irreproachable, nor were his religious opinions lifted much above paganism. In both these respects, however, he was no worse than many of his fellow-Humanists. Like Filelfo, he was a typical son of the Renaissance!

The association of Cosimo with Humanism and the Humanists may be said to fall naturally into three great periods. The earliest lasted from the outset of his education under Salutato, Guarino, Gasparino da Barziza, and others, to the date of his banishment, an epoch of academic study and mental fertilisation. The middle period lasted from his return from exile in 1434 to the Treaty of Lodi in 1455, a period when his taste was gradually being matured, as his learning and his culture acquired depth and breadth, and when he sought to gather round him all the most prominent classical scholars, sculptors, painters, architects, and men of letters, that he might encourage them to popularise the results of Renaissance genius. Finally

came the last epoch, extending from the Treaty of Lodi to the date of his death in 1464, a period wherein he endeavoured to consolidate Humanism by encouraging the formation of academies, such as the Platonic Academy of Florence, which was the model of that in Rome founded by Pomponius Lætus, and the Neapolitan one, first started by Beccadelli, but formally constituted by Jovianus Pontanus.

Of these periods, the first was largely his intellectual seedtime. Towards its conclusion the services he rendered to the cause of letters, through his agents and friends disinterring and copying at his cost the earliest MSS., were of the greatest value. But the two later epochs were richer in far-reaching results as regards the patronage of letters, results which attained their climax in his latest epoch, when, his political anxieties over, he could devote himself unreservedly to the cultivation and fostering of letters.

Of the Medici it was their greatest gift, as it was their greatest glory, that they could sympathise with, and by sympathising encourage and evoke, the hidden genius of these master-minds. Cosimo possessed this power in rich measure; his grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent, in measure still richer. The former, however, never manifested the marvellous sympathetic affinity with all the varied phases of culture and the arts characteristic of Lorenzo. In that lay the essential difference between the mind of Cosimo and that of Lorenzo—in a word, between sympathy and affinity!

Humanistic culture in Florence had flourished luxuriantly during the first three-and-thirty years of the fifteenth century. From the exile of Cosimo in that year until the Treaty of Lodi in 1455 it had been

somewhat checked by the wars and social unrest distinguishing that period of Florentine history. Cosimo was at that time weaning his fellow-citizens from their traditional policy of a league with Venice against Milan, to his new scheme of a league with Milan against Venice, the great commercial and financial rival of Florence in the markets of the world. When, therefore, the Treaty of Lodi brought a prolonged peace as its result, Humanistic studies again received a fillip. The great classical authors were read and commented upon by scholars of the first rank. The science of Textual criticism took its rise in its two branches of *Recension*, or comparing the various codices, and *Hermeneutics*, or explaining the meaning of the text. The labours of Niccoli in this direction were invaluable, and he may be styled the "Father of Comparative Criticism."

When he died he bequeathed his methods to a group of scholars, all of whom belonged to the Medicean circle and regarded Cosimo as their patron. The munificence of the latter in providing the stately Marcian Library for Niccoli's collection, his interest in the project of founding a public library of the kind, and his commissions to Ciriaco of Ancona[1] to scour Europe in search of MSS., all evince the depth and sincerity of his Renaissance sympathies. The group of scholars associated with the two earlier periods of Cosimo's life, and whom he gathered around him at his table, whether at the Palazzo Medici or at his villa at Careggi, was a remarkable one.

[1] Ciriaco de' Pizzicolli. He wandered over every part of Italy, Greece, and the Greek Islands, collecting medals, gems, fragments of sculpture, buying MSS., transcribing records, and amassing a vast store of archæological knowledge.

One of the chief ornaments of the Medicean circle during the two earlier periods of Cosimo's life was Lionardi Bruni (1369–1443), Chancellor of the Republic. He was born, like more than one of his brother Humanists, at Arezzo, and early became imbued with a love of learning through reading of the efforts of Petrarch to arouse enthusiasm in the classics. He began the study of law, but Coluccio Salutato, then Chancellor of Florence, impressed by his remarkable talents, advised him to devote himself to letters, and assisted him with the fee entitling him to attend the lectures of Chrysoloras. The youthful imagination became inflamed with emulation as the great Hellenist unfolded his classic treasures before his enraptured audience. Law was thrown to the winds, and Lionardi devoted himself to the cultivation of a pure Latin style in order that he might follow in the path opened up by Salutato. The latter, by the exquisite Latin prose in which all his official and diplomatic papers were couched, had made it a *sine quâ non* that if a man would occupy the position of State or Papal Secretary in any of the Italian Republics or the Roman Curia, he must have command of a correct and graceful Latin style,—that being, in Italy at least, the language of politics as of scholarship. An immense field of employment was thus thrown open to the Humanists. Bruni's reputation as a Latinist spread. Through Salutato's influence he was appointed Apostolic Secretary to the Roman Curia by the notorious John XXIII., lost the office for a time after the deposition of the latter by the Council of Constance, was reappointed by Martin V., and retained it until his election as Chancellor of the Republic of Florence in 1427. Till his death in 1443

he held this important position, filling it with honour alike to himself and the Republic. Personally a man of imposing presence and dignified manners, he dearly loved pomp and display. As Vespasiano informs us, he was always followed when he walked abroad by a train of scholars and foreign visitors.[1] The State papers he wrote were models of Latinity, while his public speeches were frequently likened to those of Pericles. His literary activity was extraordinary. The *History of Florence* which bears his name, though now forgotten, was in its day compared with Livy's *History*, upon which the author had modelled himself, and whose "Second Decade" he had the temerity to attempt to restore. His other works were a history of the Gothic invasion of Italy, *Lives* of Cicero and Aristotle, *Commentaries* on his own times, and several volumes of *Collected Letters*. It was as a translator from the Greek, however, that his great Renaissance services were rendered. To his industry the fifteenth century owed Aristotle's *Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Economics*;[2] Plato's *Phædo*, *Crito*, *Apology*, *Phædrus*, the *Gorgias*, along with the *Epistles*; six *Lives* of Plutarch, and two "Orations" of Demosthenes. In addition to these he wrote satires, essays, controversial treatises, philippics, and tracts on literary and antiquarian topics; also, in Italian, the *Lives* of Dante and Petrarch. He was at once one of the most learned, the most intellectual, and the most versatile of the earlier Humanists. Though his Latin style is now held in little estimation, being turgid, bombastic, and loaded with tawdry and meretricious ornament, in its day it was regarded as well-nigh

[1] Cf. Gregorovius, bk. xiii. cap. vi. p. 563.

[2] Then thought genuine.

classic. To Bruni, the Renaissance owed much for his eager industry in diffusing the benefits of the new culture, and for identifying the civic authorities of Florence with the patronage of letters.

Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439) was another member of the Medicean circle in the days of Cosimo. Born in Romagna, and in the eighth year of his age placed in the Convent degli Angeli in Florence, he early gave promise of talents of a superior order. He was amongst the first pupils of Chrysoloras, and eventually became one of the greatest scholars of his time, his mastery over Greek rivalling that of Filelfo. To wide learning he united great force of character, keen dialectic subtility, and persuasive eloquence. Eugenius IV. admired him so profoundly that he made him General of the Camaldolese Order in 1431, and entrusted the representation of the case of the Western Church largely to him during the negotiations for Union between the Greek and Roman communions. His cell was the meeting-place of all the learned men in Florence, and he kept up correspondence with scholars all over Europe. His devout piety led him to refuse to undertake any literary work of a secular character save the translation of Diogenes Laertius, but he translated many portions of the Greek Fathers, and was also acquainted with Hebrew. His influence on behalf of the Renaissance was largely exercised through others, either by encouraging them to prosecute their studies according to the methods of the "New Learning," or by revising their work after completion. The correspondence, however, which he maintained with scholars has been preserved and collected. Under the title *Epistolæ Ambrogii Traversari* it furnishes us

with the most vivid pictures of the social and literary life of the Renaissance epoch, and with many useful facts regarding Cosimo's policy and aims.

Carlo Marsuppini of Arezzo — hence called Carlo Aretino—came to Florence while a youth to study Greek. His abilities attracted the attention of Niccoló de' Niccoli, who introduced him to Cosimo, by whose influence he was appointed lecturer at the "Uffiziali dello Studio."

"At the time he began to lecture Eugenius was holding his Court in Florence, and the cardinals and nephews of the Pope, attended by foreign ambassadors and followed by the apostolic secretaries, mingled with burghers and students from a distance round the desk of the young scholar. Carlo's reading was known to be extensive, and his memory was celebrated as prodigious. Yet on this occasion of his first lecture he surpassed all that was expected of him, for neither Greeks nor Romans had an author from which he did not quote."[1]

Filelfo, who was lecturing in Florence at the time, had the mortification of seeing his benches empty, while Marsuppini's could not accommodate all who desired to be present. Carlo was grave and silent in manner, with a tinge of melancholy in his nature. A pure pagan as regards religious beliefs, he ridiculed the Christian faith and died without the rites of the Church. His writings were mostly annotations upon the classical authors, and have not been preserved. He wrote much in verse, into which he translated the *Batrachomyomachia* of Homer and the first book of the *Iliad*. His services to the Renaissance were rendered chiefly through teaching and lecturing; but after he had succeeded Bruni as

[1] Vespasiano's *Vita di Carlo d'Arezzo*, condensed by Symonds.

Chancellor of Florence in 1443, he employed several copyists constantly transcribing rare texts for scholars, to whom he presented them as gifts. In this way he did great good to the cause of letters.

Gianozzo Manetti was second to none of the Florentine Humanists in scholarship and culture. During the first twenty-five years of life he was trained to mercantile pursuits, but at length he threw off parental control that he might devote himself entirely to study and literature. So obstinate was his industry in the acquisition of knowledge that he allowed himself only five hours of sleep, and spent the rest of his day in study. In Greek and Latin he soon placed himself in the first rank of Florentine scholarship, afterwards adding Hebrew to his repertory of languages; and he employed his great learning in the service of the Church, demolishing the philological foundation on which several of the heresies of the time were based. For example, in his erudite work *Contra Judæos et Gentes*, he proves that many of the interpretations of prophecies upon which the Jews were relying for the unfulfilled advent of the Messiah were quite erroneous, and that the predictions themselves were in reality accomplished in the life and labours of Jesus. His mastery over Hebrew was manifested in a new translation of the Psalms into Latin and Italian. Manetti was also a politician and diplomatist of high standing. Not only did he serve with great ability and acceptance as Florentine ambassador at Venice, Naples, Ferrara, Milan, and Rome; he was also called upon to administer the government of Scarperia, Pistoia, and Pescia, at epochs in their history when the possession of the highest administrative skill was demanded for

the task, united to a tact and a suave firmness as rare as, in this case at least, they were necessary. His eloquence and skill in extempore speaking enabled him to render valuable services to the Republic, on such occasions as public ceremonials and the visits of foreign potentates. His services to the Renaissance consist in his eager delight in communicating the vast stores of knowledge he possessed to younger students, in his self-denying labours on the Latin and Greek texts, his ungrudging expenditure of time and money in securing MSS. which, as soon as copied, he caused to be circulated among such scholars as poverty precluded from acquiring the means of culture. Furthermore, as a Hebraist he was among the first of his age, and his achievements in this field of effort entitle him to the highest praise.[1] Cosimo, however, would endure no rival near his throne. Gianozzo Manetti became so great a power in Florence as a liberal-minded politician and a foe to oppression, that he excited the jealousy of the Medicean party, who ruined him by extravagant taxes. On the character of Cosimo the fact remains as a stain of dishonour, that he deliberately crushed Manetti because he feared his virtues. In addition to his great controversial work against the Jews and Gentiles, referred to above, he translated the whole of the New Testament, also all the ethical treatises of Aristotle into Latin, and several of the Greek classics into Italian.

Than Manetti few of the Renaissance worthies were of nobler character. While free from the prevailing

[1] Manetti was commissioned by Nicholas v. to translate the whole of the Bible from the Hebrew and Greek. The death of the Pope, however, stopped the work.—Gregorovius, bk. xiii. cap. vi.

vices of the age, he was pious, and esteemed moral elevation of soul a more precious attribute than the most soaring genius. His last years were spent in retirement and amid his favourite studies, in an asylum generously afforded him by King Alfonso of Naples.

One of the chief ornaments of the Medicean circle from about 1420 to 1447, when to the surprise of all—himself most of all—he was raised to the chair of St. Peter, as the first Humanist Pope,—was Tommaso Parentucelli, otherwise known as Thomas of Sarzana. Born at the town in question in 1398, he was educated at the University of Bologna, where he studied with great distinction theology and the seven liberal arts. Even in youth he was regarded as a prodigy of learning, and he was barely twenty when he was appointed house-tutor for one year to the children of Rinaldo degli Albizzi, and at the expiration of that term entered the family of Palla degli Strozzi, one of the most cultured men of his age. Having qualified for office in the Church, he entered the service of Cardinal Niccoló degli Albergati, Archbishop of Bologna—also a man of great learning, and in executing his commissions he visited most of the countries in Europe. When the Papal Court in the pontificate of Eugenius IV. was forced to remove to Florence, Tommaso followed his patron thither. Here he became intimate with Cosimo de' Medici, who conceived a warm admiration for the acute, alert, learning-loving monk. To Cosimo he was of service in arranging and cataloguing the library of Niccoli. Even at this time he was in receipt of a pension from his patron, who told him never to lack money for the purchase of any book he required,—

the same privilege as the great banker had accorded to Niccoli.

Albergati died in 1443; Eugenius at Cosimo's suggestion appointed Tommaso to the vacant See of Bologna. In six months time he was called to the College of Cardinals, and in 1447 became Pope with the title of Nicholas v. His Humanistic reputation, as one of the most widely cultured men of the age, alone won for him this elevation, for he had neither family influence nor wealth to secure for him the seat of St. Peter's. "Who in Florence would have thought that a poor bell-ringer of a priest would be made Pope, to the confusion of the proud," was his remark to his friend Vespasiano when the news was announced to him. He requited Cosimo's princely kindness to him by appointing him papal banker.

In his days of poverty as "a poor priest" he had said: "If I were rich I would indulge in two extravagances—building and the collection of books." As Pope he realised these dreams, and ennobled religion and worship by the services of literature and art. He collected the scattered MSS. that were in the papal buildings, and became the real founder of the Vatican Library.

"His agents were seeking MSS. in all likely places, and he offered the enormous reward of 5000 florins[1] for a copy of the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew. His chief delight was to handle and arrange these volumes, and his particular favourites were magnificently bound in crimson velvet with silver clasps. They included the presentation copies of the translations

[1] This sum would represent in our current money something like £2000. The Florentine florin at this period was equal to about 8s. 6d. or 8s. 9d, but afterwards it decreased in value very materially.

from the Greek he had suggested and nobly rewarded. He delighted to be hailed as a new Mæcenas by the wandering knight-errants of learning."

The appointment of this distinguished Humanist to the papal chair raised great expectations among the friends of the "New Learning." Nor were they disappointed. He lavished the revenues of the Holy See upon men of letters, that he might encourage them to devote their talents to the service of the Church. Liberal-minded, tolerant, and generous, he was by no means insistant that those he helped should subscribe absolutely to every doctrine of Mother Church.[1] The consequence was, he attracted well-nigh all the Humanists in Italy to his service, and the scale upon which he remunerated them was princely. Tiraboschi informs us that Laurentius Valla received 500 scudi for his translation of Thucydides; Guarino, for his rendering of Strabo, 1500 scudi; Perotti, 500 ducats for Polybius; while Manetti was granted a pension of 600 scudi per annum, that he might defend the Church against Jews, Turks, and infidels.[2] Piero Candido Decembrio was engaged to translate Appian; Poggio, Diodorus Siculus and the *Cyropædia* of Xenophon; while Valla, in addition to Thucydides, was commissioned to translate Herodotus, and in conjunction with Decembrio, the *Iliad* into Latin prose. The Greek, Georgios Trapezuntius, was entrusted with the *Metaphysics*, the *Physics*, and the *Problems* of Aristotle, also the *Republic* and the *Laws* of Plato. The list might be prolonged almost indefinitely. Every scholar with any pretensions to skill in translation could obtain almost his own price

[1] Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung*, ii. 202; Vespasiano, *Vita*.
[2] Ambros. Camald., *Ep.* VIII. 42.

for his work from this culture-loving pontiff. Highly paid posts were conferred on all the leading Humanists. During the eight years of his pontificate (1447–1455) he did more to advance the cause of the Renaissance than any other man in Italy save Cosimo de' Medici. Well might the Humanists say with Filelfo, when the death of Nicholas was announced: "The Church mourns the Holy Father, we mourn *our* father."[1] Despite his interest in letters he wrote nothing, contenting himself with stimulating others to worthy deeds.

Section 5.—*Closing Decade of Cosimo's Life*

Popes—Calixtus III., 1455; Pius II., 1458; Paul II., 1464

We now reach the final period in the life of Cosimo—the final and the greatest. Our study of the progress of the Renaissance in Florence has been pursued hitherto through the various eras in the life of Cosimo de' Medici, because he united in himself all the best characteristics of the Renaissance spirit. Until the Treaty of Lodi in 1455, Northern Italy was the battlefield of Europe; after it, and until the Papal Wars consequent on the failure in 1478 of the Pazzi conspiracy against the Medici, Florence, at least, had peace. Thus Cosimo, during the last decade of his life, was fortunate enough to see the Republic enjoying a prolonged period of quiescence as the direct result of his policy, which supported a Milanese in place of a Venetian alliance. His country needed rest, and now she had obtained it on the most satisfactory conditions.

[1] Filelf., *Epis.*, bk. xiii. 1.

The Renaissance movement in Florence, although progressive, had yet its seasons of semi-stagnation, when, as has been said, the prevalence of the warlike spirit militated against the interests of literature. Yet no sooner did a period of quiet recur than Humanism again came to the front. Other Florentines than Cosimo had interested themselves in the "Revival of Learning." Yet their labours were, comparatively speaking, without effect, until he came forward with his practical wisdom and common-sense plans to concentrate and consolidate their efforts. To Cosimo de' Medici in large measure is due the credit of making the Renaissance what it became, a general not a parochial influence, and also of diffusing among Florentine scholars a truer spirit of classicism and a nobler love of antiquity than, at that time at least, was manifested elsewhere in Italy. "Valdarno's shady groves" were the retreat of all the learning, as well as all the arts and sciences of the age, the meeting-place of *literati* not only from Europe, but from many parts of Asia as well. In a word, Florence during Cosimo's life was the birthplace of that spirit of intellectual and religious liberty, as well as the battleground where were fought the early engagements of that mighty war between ecclesiastical authority and freedom of conscience. From her Mercato Vecchio or market square those germs of spiritual freedom spread to Germany, Switzerland, France, and England, which in time produced the Reformation.

In the Tuscan genius there was something predisposing it to pursue everything that savoured of freedom,—to strike out new paths in politics, literature, science, and art, and to revel in life, light, and colour. Long before the dates usually assigned for the birth

of the Renaissance spirit, Tuscany in general, and Florence in particular, were the home of all that was greatest and best in letters and art. Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio in literature; Cimabue, Giotto, Buffalmacco in painting; Niccolo Pisano in sculpture; Andrea Pisano and Ghiberti in bronze-work; Orcagna in the inspiration he gave to strict methods of design, had all prepared the soil for the Renaissance seed. In architecture the Church of the Samminists near Florence, built about 1013, the Cathedral of Pisa, begun about 1063, with the churches at Lucca and Pistoia, all tend to show that even early in the Middle Ages the Tuscans were aiming at a Revival or Renaissance of architecture. Arnolfo del Cambio, both in his designs for public or municipal buildings—as, for instance, in the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence—and for ecclesiastical structures, as, for example, in the Cathedral of Florence, afterwards to be so marvellously transformed from the characteristics of his design by Brunelleschi's dome, aimed at a union of Grecian simplicity with Gothic minuteness of detail. He is only a type of many who, inspired by the classic spirit long before the Revival of Letters, sought to impress it on their work. We mention these facts to show that the "Renaissance" in its literary aspect, otherwise the Revival of Letters, was not the earliest form of the great inspiration; but that the classic spirit, which had reached its highest expression in the Hellenic sculpture of Phidias and Praxiteles, rather than in the painting of Apelles, after lingering in remote regions and amid forgotten forms of art, was gradually reawakened to an intelligent expression of the language of high imaginings, by the brush of Cimabue and Giotto and the chisel of Niccolo Pisano.

The intense susceptibility of the Florentines was the predisposing cause of their early pre-eminence in every branch of Renaissance culture. Many of their most distinguished men were not only "polymaths" in their relation to letters, but "polytechnists" in their proficiency in all the arts. For example, Giotto, Orcagna, Leo Battista Alberti, Lionardo da Vinci, and others were as many-sided in the inspirations of their genius as they were supreme in its multiform concrete realisation. What is said of Alberti may be said of all these gifted sons of the Renaissance—

"His insight into every branch of knowledge seemed intuitive, and his command of the arts was innate. At the age of twenty he composed the comedy of *Philodoxius*, which passed for an antique and was published by the Aldi as the work of Lepidus Comicus in 1588. Of music, though he had not made it a special study, he was a thorough master, composing melodies that gave delight to scientific judges. He painted pictures and wrote three books on painting; practised architecture, and compiled ten books on building. Of his books, chiefly portraits, nothing remains; but the Church of S. Andrea at Mantua, the Palazzo Rucellai at Florence, and the remodelled Church of S. Francesco at Rimini, attest his greatness as an architect. . . . He now turned his plastic genius to philosophy and mathematics. It is believed that he anticipated some modern discoveries in optics, and he certainly advanced the science of perspective; . . . he devoted attention to mechanics, and devised machinery for raising sunken ships; . . . he was never tired of interrogating nature, conducting curious experiments, and watching her more secret operations. As a physiognomist and diviner he acquired a reputation bordering on wizardry. In general society his wisdom and his wit, the eloquence of his discourse and

the brilliance of his improvisation, rendered him most fascinating."[1]

The distinguishing feature of the final period of Cosimo's life was his endeavour to consolidate his work in connection with the Renaissance into some permanent form. He had witnessed the effects of the fall of Constantinople, and while he rejoiced at the stimulus given to letters by the diffusion of the learned Greeks throughout Europe, he viewed with the keenest apprehension the growth of the Ottoman power. "They have long knocked at the gate of Europe," he remarked, alluding to the geographical position of Constantinople; "now they have succeeded in bursting it open. What will happen now? I much fear a recurrence to barbarism if they overrun Eastern Europe." He had also seen the rise of the art of printing, though he does not seem to have gauged the infinite possibilities opened up by the new process of "impression from movable types." Like his own agent Vespasiano and Duke Federigo da Montefeltro, he preferred a fine specimen of caligraphy—the work of a first-rate copyist, to the best printing. His grandson Lorenzo estimated more truly the character of the revolution to be wrought by the new art: "It will create a new world," was his remark, and his prediction has been abundantly fulfilled.

Cosimo's closing years were haunted by the conviction that he had achieved nothing likely to prove impervious

[1] Symonds, *Renaissance*, vol. ii. p. 247. The entire paragraphs, from which I have only quoted a sentence or two, are worthy of close study, as they state clearly and succinctly a curious problem in connection with the Renaissance.

to the wear and tear of time. "Fifty years and I shall be forgotten," he said, with profound sadness to Carlo Marsuppini, "unless those few buildings I have erected keep alive the remembrance that long ago there did live such a man as Cosimo de' Medici." Marsuppini consoled him by relating the following story—

"One of the great Arabian caliphs, while riding out into the country with his suite, came upon a very aged man engaged in planting fruit trees in his little orchard. On learning that the old man had no children he said: 'How foolish of this aged father to slave in connection with that of which neither he nor any descendants from him will ever eat.' On making a remark to this effect to the old man, the latter said: 'Not so, sir; neither my father nor I planted these trees from which I have derived such pleasure from the fruit. I do not know who planted them, but seeing that those who lived before us have had the forethought to plant these for the unknown ones who were to come after them, ought not I to have some consideration for the unknown ones who are to come after me?'"

Cosimo was delighted with the story. To his dying day it influenced his life, and the immediate outcome of it was the Platonic Academy at Florence. For years he had toiled in collecting MSS., and in disseminating copies of them by means of the great band of *scriptorii*, or copyists, which he retained in his service under the charge of Vespasiano. But he felt that something more was needed. A few years previous Gemisthus Pletho had lectured in Florence on "Plato."[1] At that time (1439–1440) Cosimo was desirous of establishing a Hellenic Academy to encourage the study of Greek.

[1] See *ante*, p. 85.

Further conversation with the "Sage of Mistra," [1] and the influence of Lionardo Bruni and Ambrogio Traversari, directed his thoughts towards Plato. Bruni had translated the *Phædo, Crito, Phædrus,* and other works of the great Grecian idealist, but had laid more stress on the theological than the metaphysical side of his system. Gemisthus took the same line. The consequence was that Platonism became in Italy a synonym for a bastard Christianity, in which Plato's ethical sublimity was lost in a maze of obscure Eclecticism, and the Atonement of our Lord was ranked in the same category as the death of Socrates.

Cosimo's studies in Platonism led him to the belief that in the system "of him of Academe" he had discovered a panacea for all the moral and spiritual ills to which flesh is heir. Rising almost to the borderline of the pathetic is his enthusiasm over Plato. The much-desired element which he professed to find lacking in Christianity, namely, a sympathy with all possible forms of beauty, he declared to be present in Platonism. Early in the fifth decade of the fifteenth century, therefore, he proceeded to found a Platonic Academy in Florence, whose aim would be the study of this philosophy, in development of which he believed the moral and spiritual, as well as the intellectual, regeneration of the world to be bound up. The number of its members was at first small. Few scholars as yet concerned themselves with Plato. This, however, Cosimo determined to remedy. He set apart Marsiglio Ficino, the son of his physician, to be the high priest of the new faith. From early boyhood

[1] Mistra, in the Peloponnesus, where Gemisthus acted as judge, and where he died in 1450 at the age of ninety-five.

Ficino was educated with a view to assuming, when competent, the presidentship or professorship—for it was both—of the new institution. Born in the year 1433, Ficino was scarcely eighteen when he was received into the Medicean palace. Apartments were assigned him, and a stated income allowed that he might devote himself to the study of the Platonic philosophy, undisturbed by such sublunary concerns as whence his bread and butter were to come.

He proved himself a worthy recipient of Cosimo's bounty. His abilities were of a very high order, and his prosecution of his studies proceeded as much from intense love of the subject as from the consciousness that his life's future depended on it. When he was five-and-twenty he formally assumed the presidentship of the Platonic Academy. Henceforward his life was consecrated to lecturing upon "the one philosopher," as Plato was called by his votaries, and to translating his works. Though he entered the priesthood and faithfully discharged its duties, though, moreover, all his days he remained an earnest Christian, there can be no doubt, from a perusal of his works, that to him Plato was as much a forerunner of Christ as any of the prophets. The whole bent of his mind was directed towards assimilating and unifying Christianity and Platonism. His was the attitude of the Alexandrian Mystics. He even preferred Plotinus as an exponent of Platonism to Plato himself, inasmuch as he obtained more features of resemblance to the sayings of Jesus from the works of the disciple than from those of the master.

Ficino's work in connection with the Platonic Academy in Florence was of great value in advancing the progress of the Renaissance. Apart from his

philosophical ability, he was a scholar of undoubted eminence. Characterised by fidelity to the text and felicity of diction, as his translations undoubtedly are, the fact must, however, be admitted that he was more faithful sometimes to the letter than the spirit of the original. Though his rendering into Latin of Plato's entire works, albeit completed in 1477, was not published until 1482, eighteen years after the death of Cosimo, the probability is that most if not all the works were read to the latter before the close of his life. The eager earnestness of the great statesman over the diligent prosecution of the task—an earnestness increasing as for him life's shadows lengthened—is profoundly pathetic. Platonism presented itself to him as at once the solution of the perplexing problems and the solace of the inseparable sorrows of human existence. Ficino was always Cosimo's companion, when the old man retired from the harassments of his position, as the unofficial head of the Republic, to the villa of Careggi on the sunny slopes of Fiesole. There he strove to forget the burden of political anxieties in study and meditation. In his seventieth year (1459) he thus writes to his young protégé[1]—

"Yesterday I arrived at Careggi—not so much for the purpose of improving my fields as myself: let me see you, Marsiglio, as soon as possible, and forget not to bring with you the book of our favourite Plato, *De Summo Bono*—which I presume, according to your promise, you have ere this translated into Latin; for there is no employment to which I so ardently devote myself as to find out the true road to happiness. Come, then, and fail not to bring with you the Orphean lyre."

[1] *Ficini Epis.*, i. 1.

After the death of his patron, Ficino wrote to Lorenzo de' Medici that during twelve years he had conversed with Cosimo on matters of philosophy, and always found him as acute in reasoning as he was prudent and powerful in action. "I owe to Plato much," he adds,—"to Cosimo no less. He realised for me the virtues of which Plato gave me the conception."[1]

Ficino was also one of the favoured friends of Piero and of Lorenzo de' Medici. As he lived on until 1499 he had therefore to mourn the death of three Medicean patrons, Cosimo, Piero, Lorenzo, as well as the fall of the great house. He translated, in addition to Plato, Plotinus, the *Orphic Hymns* and Hermes Trismegistus, and wrote a work in defence of the Christian religion.[2] It is not difficult to understand why Plato was regarded as the philosopher *par excellence* of the Renaissance, rather than Aristotle. The latter was identified with Scholasticism and the bondage of the human intellect in the fetters of authority. Plato represented the Morning Star of freedom, the emancipation of the mind of man from the rigid plate-mail of ecclesiastical dogma. Before the scholars of the Renaissance epoch, Plato held up an Ideal of Beauty alike in precept and practice, as bewitching as it was ennobling. The very haziness and nebulosity of the principles passing current as "Renaissance Platonism" recommended themselves to those who so long had been held in fetters by the cast-iron logic of Aristotelian Scholasticism. Ficino's attitude was typical of the Platonists of his age. He believed that the divine Plotinus had first revealed the theology of the divine Plato, with the "Mysteries"

[1] Symonds, vol. ii. p. 129. [2] *De Religione Christiana.*

of the ancients, and that these were consistent with Christianity, although he had to confess he could not find in Plato's writings the mystery of the Trinity.[1]

Cosimo sustained in 1463 a crushing affliction in the death of his son Giovanni, a man who, had he lived, would probably have become the greatest of the Medici. Intellectually, he was marvellously gifted; and at the time of his death, at the age of forty-two, he was in the very first rank as a statesman, as a scholar, as a discriminating critic of music and art, and as a patron of culture. Great things were expected of him by the circle of Florentine Humanists. When he died the blow to the cause of letters seemed little less crushing than to Cosimo himself; for Piero, his elder son, was so weak in health as to be unable to take part in the rough-and-tumble strife of Florentine politics. Yet it was this loss of his uncle that implanted the ambition in the mind of Lorenzo the Magnificent, then a boy of eleven, to realise all that uncle would have been to his family and to Florence.

To the aged Cosimo the death of Giovanni sounded his own death-knell. Though he lingered on for about a year, though he endeavoured to assuage his grief by applying to his case the maxims of Plato, the old man felt his work was done, and that he was nearing his eternal rest.

Albeit well-nigh every Humanist in Northern Italy sought to console the benefactor from whom one and all had received benefits so manifold; though Pope Pius II. (Æneas Sylvius) wrote him a letter of condolence in choice Renaissance Latin, to which Cosimo replied in a style scarcely less choice, all sympathy fell

[1] Schaff, *The Renaissance*, chap. xvi. p. 65.

upon a heart incapable of receiving it, inasmuch as it had beheld the ruin of its dearest hopes. Therefore that smile, so strangely sweet and winning to all his friends, was seen on his lips no more. Gradually he drooped. His limbs lost the power of motion, and in consequence he became inordinately stout. His mind, however, remained as clear as ever. A short time before his death he asked to be carried through the apartments of his palace: "'Tis too great a house for so small a family," he said sadly, alluding to the dread he entertained that if there was no strong chief of the Medicean faction, its enemies, jealous of its position, and already in his absence beginning to make headway against it, might achieve its ruin.

Cosimo died in 1464, mourned far and wide as the "father of his country." He had lived to see the third great epoch of Humanism—which lasted from the fall of Constantinople to the death of his grandson, Lorenzo de' Medici—fairly under way. He had contributed his share—a share of no trifling importance and magnitude—to the furtherance of its progress. New men were arising, however, whose ideals in art and letters were different from those he had followed. It is a trait in him no less great than gracious that he welcomed the new inspiration in Cristoforo Landino, Bartolommeo Scala, Argyropoulos, Andronicos Kallistos, Tommaso Benci, Cavalcanti, and Alberti as warmly as thirty or forty years before he had hailed the old, in Bruni, Traversari, and Marsuppini.

Most of these scholars lived to adorn the age of Lorenzo. But one Humanist, who although born in Tuscan territory and educated in the city, had never permanently resided there, during Cosimo's last years

returned to Florence to fill the position of Chancellor, after spending the greater portion of his life as Apostolic Secretary in Rome. This was Poggio Bracciolini, who lives in history with honour and repute as the man who first awakened to the teachings of the mighty ruins of ancient Rome, and who wrote a book, valuable at the time and for long after, on the "Topography" of the city in the days of the Empire. Poggio, who was born in 1380 and died in 1458, was, as we have seen, one of the most indefatigable of Italian codex hunters.[1] After having had his bent towards classic studies warmly encouraged by Salutato, he proceeded to Rome in 1402, and served as one of the papal secretaries under no fewer than eight pontiffs, from Boniface IX. to Nicholas V. Sometimes the Holy Fathers were obliged to leave Rome and to take refuge temporarily in Florence. But with the exception of these sojourns at Valdarno, and a visit paid to England, on the invitation of Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester,—the Beaufort of Shakespeare's *Henry VI.*,—Poggio never left Rome, unless on his brief journeys in search of MSS. The "Eternal City" was his mistress, his bride, and her ruins and antiquities exercised over him a glamour comparable only to that exerted by a pretty woman over an impressionable man.

Yet he never lost his love for Florence. He was a devoted adherent of the Medicean circle, ready to fight the battles of the faction with such antagonists as Filelfo, and professing for Cosimo an affection as deep as it was disinterested. In his last years his one desire was to return to the banks of the Arno and to end his life there. Although seventy-three years of age at the

[1] See his *Life* by Shepherd in English, and by Recanati in Italian.

time of the death of Carlo Marsuppini, Chancellor of Florence, the old man accepted the offer of the vacant post, and journeyed north in eager haste to assume the duties. For five years he held the office, the duties being often discharged by deputy, owing to the Chancellor's weakness.

To the very last Poggio was a working Humanist, inspired by an insatiable desire to advance the cause of letters. His enthusiasm over those discoveries of the codices of the great Latin and Greek classics, his unselfishness in communicating to others of his intellectual store, the unwearied energy wherewith he pursued his researches under difficulties that would have daunted many another man—all tend to show how well deserved was the title bestowed upon him by Cosimo, when the banker-statesman heard of the death of the grand old Humanist: "Of a truth," said he, "one of the pillars of Humanism has passed away." In addition to his work on the antiquities and topography of Rome,[1] he wrote voluminously. Dialogues, satires, invectives, translations, etc., all flowed from his prolific pen. The works by which he is now remembered are his satires on *Hypocrisy* and on the *Fratres Observantiæ*—severe attacks upon monasticism and the clerical orders generally; his *Facetiæ*, or witty stories, and his *History of Florence*—the last-named a work of great merit. Poggio's working life in the cause of the Renaissance extended over fifty-five years. Though he had many bitter controversies, such as those with Filelfo, Laurentius Valla, Guarino, and Perotti, on points of disputed scholarship, he was widely honoured

[1] *De Varietate Fortunæ*, the first book of which is often styled *Urbis Romæ Descriptio.*

and admired, and may be regarded as one of the typical Italian Humanists.

But we must not run away with the idea that Cosimo's interest in the Renaissance was bounded by his literary and intellectual sympathies. Far from it. Granted that his tastes were more literary than artistic, and evinced themselves rather in the direction of fostering classic culture than in patronising the productions of Italian genius, he nevertheless was a generous friend to all the leading painters, sculptors, architects, musicians, and workers in metals of the age. As Voigt says, his delight in poets, classical scholars, and artists were all links in the one chain whereby he bound Florence to himself.[1] As we have already said, he became all things to all men, if so be he might attach them to himself. His knowledge of all the branches of art was that of an expert. While his agents, whom he commissioned to scour the known world for him in search of codices—namely, Ciriaco, Poggio, Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Antonio da Massa, Andrea de' Rimini, and others were enjoined to spare no expense in securing MSS. of value in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Arabic, as well as articles of *vertu* of all kinds—they were also instructed to keep an eye on the productions of contemporary genius, and especially to recommend to his notice any case where obscurity of circumstances was preventing the advance of genius along the best lines of progress and development.[2] Cosimo's patronage of art, like his patronage of learning, was from the level of equality, not from the altitude of superiority. Roscoe's remark is well within the truth—

[1] *Die Wiederbelebung.* [2] Bandini, *Lettera.*

"In affording protection to the arts of architecture, painting, and sculpture, Cosimo set a great example to those who by their rank and their riches could alone afford them effectual aid. The countenance shown by him to those arts was not of that kind which their professors generally experience from the great: it was not conceded as a bounty nor received as a favour, but appeared in the friendship and equality that subsisted between the artist and his patron."[1]

The enormous sums spent by Cosimo in building were intended to impress the susceptible Florentines in much the same way as a modern merchant endeavours to catch the fickle public by wholesale advertising. His expenditure of money on buildings —buildings from which the citizens of his native town would derive the greatest amount of benefit and pleasure—was just his "big ad." to secure the adhesion of the Florentines to his family after he was gone. He was far-seeing enough to perceive that the power to confer immortality lay with the scholars, the architects, the painters, and the sculptors of the Renaissance. Therefore Cosimo, though his interest in the Renaissance was unquestionably sincere, found it advantageous to spend his money freely in supporting the movement. Besides benefiting the public and winning their regard, he was thereby able to patronise genius without pauperising it through direct charity.

Cosimo, then, was illustrious as a patron alike of architecture, sculpture, painting, and music. In the first named his Renaissance tastes were again in evidence when, in selecting the plans of a palazzo for the family, he preferred the simplicity of Michelozzi to the ornate splendour of Brunelleschi. Well did he know

[1] Roscoe, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, chap. i. p. 77.

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the jealousy of the Florentines towards any public man who made a display of wealth and pomp. They at once jumped to the conclusion that the individual in question aimed at the supreme power. "Envy is a plant that needs no watering," he said in his terse epigrammatic style, and he spoke out of the fulness of his own experience. Even in this trivial matter his example influenced the prevailing mode. Fashion enacted that simplicity was preferable to splendour.

Although Cosimo, with respect to his palazzo and his villa at Careggi, gave the preference to the plans of Michelozzi, he had too true a perception of the inner soul of art to place the latter on the same level with the architect whose designs were rejected. Brunelleschi was an all-round genius of soaring sublimity; Michelozzi merely a man of talent endowed with a facile knack of adapting that talent to circumstances. Cosimo paid due honour to Brunelleschi—whose Duomo crowning the Cathedral of Florence is his immortal memorial—by employing him in undertakings where the peculiar bent of his genius would suit the end in view, such as the Churches of San Lorenzo and San Spirito and the cloisters of the Badia at Fiesole.[1] During the last years of his life in particular Cosimo indulged his weakness for building, and many were the exquisite edifices with which Florence at this time was adorned at his expense. The sums he lavished upon this hobby seem almost fabulous, yet we must remember that money was then made more easily than has been the case before or since in the world's his-

[1] See *The Story of Florence*, by E. G. Gardner (J. M. Dent & Co.), one of the finest descriptions of Florence that has yet been written, p. 127, also pp. 211–213.

tory. The old mediæval order of things was passing, the new modern one was not yet solidified into social or economic custom; people were captivated by a love of novelty which they gratified without counting the cost. This feeling finds expression in Cosimo's well-known remark, that the only thing he regretted was that he had not begun to throw away money on such objects ten years before he did.

From building to decoration is but a step, and here Cosimo also showed his cultured Renaissance taste. While his palaces, his villas, his churches were supremely beautiful without, they were as superbly finished within. As regards the Palazzo Medici in the Via Larga, and his villa of Careggi on the slopes of the hills of Fiesole, all the antique statuary and inscriptions, the fragments of classic art which his vast wealth enabled his agents to buy over the heads of all other bidders, were gathered therein, and formed a unique collection to which everyone interested in culture had free admission on certain days at stated hours. But as he kept open table, to which all his friends were welcome, and as his circle of friends virtually included all the better known citizens of Florence, practically his dwellings were free to the public.

Other industries benefited by his munificence. The finest tapestries, worked from designs executed in Florence by Paolo Uccello and others, were woven for him on the looms of Bruges, Arras, and Ghent. The balustrades and cornices, the furniture and the panels of the doors, were adorned with hunting scenes and representations of tournaments executed by Dello Delli; the floors of his halls and vestibules were embellished with

mosaics designed by Alesso Baldovinetti; while the walks in his gardens and the floors of the summer-houses were laid with tile-work under the direction of Della Robbia, whose terra-cotta statuettes peeped from many corners of the grounds and piazzas.

Cosimo encouraged his friends to rise to the highest expression of their genius. Only at their best would he recognise their work. His delicate consideration towards Paolo Uccelo and Andrea del Castagna, while they were struggling to overcome the difficulties of "perspective" and "foreshortening" when painting the frescoes on the walls of his palace,—a consideration which took the form of paying them for the time they were engaged on a series of experiments in the effects of light and shade,—was only on a par with his treatment of the great sculptor-painter Donatello, of whose work he was particularly fond, and whom he retained to paint, among other things, those famous medallions which adorned the courtyard of the Medici palace.

In painting, the choicest specimens of the art of Fra Angelico—Guido—one of Cosimo's dearest friends, and a man no less eminent for his piety than for his pictures; of the prematurely deceased Masaccio, whose genius, great as it was in the expression of simplicity and naturalness, never reached maturity; of Masaccio's disciple, Filippo Lippi, in whom the life, the light, and the laughter of the gayer side of the Renaissance spirit was typified; of Benozzo Gozzoli, the great Renaissance landscape painter, who also produced the fresco decorations in the chapel of the Palazzo Medici, where in a procession representing the visit of the Magi the members of the Medici family were introduced,—of all

these the best work, and the best only, was cherished by him with a loving reverence that evinced the true friend.

Even in music Cosimo's interest was deep, and he laboured earnestly for the reform of Italian harmony, especially in its mass compositions. At this time Italy had no native school of music, but was dependent on Flemish composers for her church service. Cosimo was the first to urge the acceptance of the Flemish style of contrapuntal or figured harmony in the service of the mass, and would have brought Ockenheim of Hainault, or his pupil Josquin Despres, to Florence had he been supported. Not till Despres had won a European fame, years after Cosimo's death, was it that his townsmen realised how far ahead of his time their great citizen-ruler had been.

But why multiply more instances of Cosimo's public-spiritedness and his zeal for the fostering of the Italian Renaissance? To him his descendants and his city owed the distinguished place they occupied in the forefront of the "Revival of Learning." Granted that the Tuscan temperament, by its acuteness, its keen intellectual acquisitiveness, its airiness and brightness, its Greek love of light, life, and colour, was peculiarly adapted for the reception and absorption of Renaissance principles; on the other hand, a patron was needed who to munificence would unite a cultured taste with regard to the various arts and pursuits, so as to foster progress with discrimination. Not every man who proclaimed himself a Renaissance scholar or painter was fitted to advance the movement along its best lines of development. Cosimo showed great discrimination in his patronage. Though he might and did assist nearly all

who claimed his bounty, he distinguished, by his commissions to produce work for his own use or pleasure, only those who were representative by their eminence as well as by their style. Miss Dorothea Ewart's summing is both incisive and accurate: "In spite of his cold manner and cynical wit it is plain that there was nothing which Cosimo understood better than the art of popularity. He was popular with all that was highest and best in the intellectual life of the day with which he was deeply in sympathy. . . . Cosimo's wisdom taught him how to identify himself with all their interests, to make himself appear to his fellow-citizens as the Florentine among Florentines." That was his claim to remembrance. But if after
were honoured with the title "Father of his Country," with equal reason, in view of what he did for letters, may he be styled "The Foster-father of the Florentine Renaissance."

CHAPTER IV

The Age of Piero de' Medici, 1419–1469

Popes—Martin v., 1417; Eugenius iv., 1431; Nicholas v., 1447; Calixtus iii., 1455; Pius ii., 1458; Paul ii., 1464.

[illegible]riod is necessarily a very short one, being merely the intercalary years between the great epoch of Cosimo and the greater one of Lorenzo. Piero was constitutionally very delicate. His life was one prolonged struggle with gout, hence his sobriquet *Il Gottoso*. Not that he was destitute of ability. Though in earlier years overshadowed by his more brilliant brother Giovanni, whose interest in the Renaissance assumed [illegible]ure almost of a passion, and whose [illegible]as, as we have seen, so profoundly [illegible] father, still Piero evinced himself a for[illegible] of the arts, the friend and associate of ciples [illegible] of the day, and one who delighted in munificence wou[illegible]lian genius.

to t[illegible] man [illegible], however, his infirmities prewi[illegible] keeping that masterful hand upon the him[illegible] rivals, who, singularly enough, were [illegible] om the ranks of his political enemies. [illegible] isalvi Neroni, Niccolo Soderini, and [illegible] were all of them prominent Medicean

supporters, yet, as we shall see, they one and all plotted against Piero. No critic of the epoch can deny that the Medicean rule weakened during Piero's tenure of the family honours, yet when occasion urged he could throw aside his constitutional predilection for retirement and act promptly and decisively. He had married Lucrezia Tornabuoni, the daughter of a noble Florentine house which had allowed its rank to lapse in order to devote itself to public office. A woman of immense intellectual power and wide culture, she kept herself abreast of all the politics and scholarship of the day, and became a potent because invisible agent in achieving the purposes of the party. Like her father-in-law she was sincerely religious, her hymns, written in seasons of spiritual exaltation and depression, being capable even yet of being read with pleasure; while her many-sided interest in letters may be judged from the fact that she was the friend of Ficino, and was deeply read in Platonism; also that Luigi Pulci's great poem *Il Morgante Maggiore* was produced in consequence of her warm encouragement and praise. Delighting in Humanistic studies herself, and following the progress of the Renaissance with an eager sympathy rare among her sex of that age, along with Giovanni, her brother-in-law, she was her father-in-law's chief assistant in carrying out his far-reaching schemes of benevolent patronage towards the chief exponents of Renaissance literature and art. Her husband's weak health rendered necessary her appearance in political and literary affairs to a greater degree than was customary for women at that time. Between the years 1463–1470 —or, in other words, after the death of Giovanni, Cosimo's younger son, and the date when her own son

Lorenzo was able to assume the honours and responsibilities attached to the position of head of the house of Medici—Lucrezia Tornabuoni virtually ruled Florence.

Her patronage was wide and at the same time discriminating. Scholars, poets, both Latin and Italian, painters, sculptors, architects, workers in gems and metals were all recipients of her bounty. By her Piero was entirely guided, while until her death, in 1481, Lorenzo always consulted her on intricate developments of policy. The services of Piero to the Renaissance would have been small indeed, had he not had a wife who was able to relieve him of the larger share of the burden when his health was bad. Cosimo's incisive saying about her, "She is the best man amongst us," was a tribute to her keen insight into the men and manners of her day.

The one point of historic interest in the life of Piero is the unexpected vigour wherewith he dealt with the attack on the house of Medici by Pitti and his associates. To Lucrezia, however, belongs the credit of devising the policy which really caused the miscarriage of this dangerous conspiracy. Old Luca Pitti had been "Cosimo's figurehead." The latter, as we have seen, preferred to remain in the background, therefore all things affecting the Government of Florence were done in the name of Pitti, until by many people, and at length apparently by himself as well, he was regarded as the real head of the State.

When Cosimo died, Pitti thought he should have been made the ruler in fact as well as in name, in place of which the government was quietly transferred to Piero. That such a course was gall and wormwood to the ambitious old schemer, to whom popular fame and

applause were as the breath of his nostrils, may well be imagined. He therefore proceeded to plot with three others of the leading men in the Medicean circle—Agnolo Acciaiuoli, Niccolo Soderini, and Diotisalvi Neroni—to oust the family from the rule of the city. At the annual election of the Signory in 1466 the plot came to a head. This ceremony always took place on 28th August, and the new body took office on 1st September. It was in reality the first favourable opportunity that presented itself since the death of Cosimo. That event took place on 1st August 1464, but the elections for that year and the succeeding one were influenced by the recollection of the services rendered by the "Father of his Country." In the meantime, however, Piero, listening to the treacherous advice of Neroni—his father's friend—decided to call in all the loans made by the Medicean banking-house. Against the will of Lucrezia this was done, and as a consequence Florentine financial credit was shaken to its foundation. Then it was that Pitti delivered his blow,—the first thing which roused Piero from his apathetic confidence that all was well. He saw Neroni's object in urging him to call in his debts, but by a clever move he somewhat neutralised the effect of the intimation by the public proclamation that the loans were only recalled for the purpose of being re-registered and granted anew on more favourable terms. Though this later announcement checked the panic to a great extent, the Medicean house lost heavily alike in money and prestige.

To pursue the details of the plot further would be beside our purpose. Suffice to say, the "Pitti faction" was beaten all along the line, largely by the energy of young Lorenzo and the wise foresight of Lucrezia. A

Signory favourable to the Medici was elected, and the plotters were banished, with the exception of Luca Pitti, who remained to drag out an indigent and dishonoured old age.

At such seasons of political excitement letters languish. Immediately on civic quiet being restored, Florence reverted to her former ways, and the culture of letters and the arts pursued their even course of progress. Little change is to be detected between the policy pursued by Cosimo towards Humanists and the Renaissance and that affected by his son. Piero and his wife followed in the footsteps of Cosimo, keeping in view the same literary aims and encouraging by their patronage the same men. In consequence, they have been somewhat overshadowed by the splendour of Cosimo's reputation on the one hand, and by that of Lorenzo on the other. Between his own father and his own son the faint figure of Piero almost disappears from view. One great writer, however, the greatest in the Italian-Latin literature of the Renaissance period, and amongst the greatest in Italian literature as a whole, owed his first start on the ladder of fame to Piero and Lucrezia. She it was who discerned the nascent genius of Poliziano, when, as a boy of ten, he was sent for his education to Florence from his native Montepulciano. She insisted on him having the best teachers of the day for his instructors, namely, Ficino and Landino, and commended the boy to the kindly care of both. For this mark of favour, Poliziano never ceased to be grateful. When his patron Lorenzo, many years later, lay a-dying, the great Italian poet-Humanist said, with a burst of intense emotion: "To the Medici I owe all I have become; my patron's

sainted mother Lucrezia honoured me, a boy, with her interest and friendship, and if my own life would be accepted now in lieu of her son's I would gladly surrender it."

Another feature to be noted as characteristic of the "age" of Piero is that during the five years of his tenure of power there was a continued increase of interest perceptible in the study of Plato and Aristotle, —not the Aristotle of the schoolmen, but the Aristotle as we know him to-day. Marsiglio Ficino and Cristoforo Landino were the rival leaders of Florentine scholarship, if rivalry could exist between those who were the closest of friends and whose sole subject of difference lay in this, that the spiritual temperament of the one led him to prefer Plato, and the practical scholarly instincts of the other — Aristotle. Each accordingly devoted himself to the elucidation of the text and tenets of his favourite philosopher. Leo Battista Alberti was one of the most distinguished ornaments of Piero's circle, as he had also been in that of Cosimo; and to the epoch of the latter must be assigned those remarkable experiments in mechanics, with that invention of the apparatus for raising sunken ships, which actually anticipated the process now employed to achieve that end. With Piero, Alberti was on terms of intimate friendship, the latter frequently commending him to the care of his sons, should the old man chance to survive him. To Piero, also, Benedetto Accolti—the successor of Poggio in the Chancellorship of Florence—dedicated his *History of the Wars between the Christians and the Infidels*, and in doing so pays a warm tribute to his munificent patronage of learning. Donato Acciaiuoli also inscribed many of his works

"to my friend and master Piero"; while in the Laurentian Library at Florence there is a poem, *De Cœtu Poetarum*, the work of Francesco Ottavio, a writer well known in his day, in the dedication of which he represents his patron Piero as surpassing the example of his father in his attention to the cause of literature and in his kindness to its professors.[1] The patronage of Humanist scholarship, therefore, suffered no diminution during the rule of Piero. At the time of the civic revolution which transferred the reins of power from the hands of the Albizzi to the Medici there had been, as we pointed out, a temporary eclipse of Renaissance studies. The scholarly and cultured Palla degli Strozzi, and a little later the eloquent Gianozzo Manetti, along with Filelfo, were all obliged to leave Florence. But the Pitti conspiracy was countenanced by none of the great scholars, and in consequence not a single Humanist was exiled.

Piero's rule was also notable owing to the number of Roman *illuminati* who sought refuge in Valdarno from the insecurity they felt on the banks of the Tiber. The pontificate of Paul II. (1464–1471) was rendered memorable by the antagonism he displayed towards Humanism and secular learning as a whole. He dismissed nearly all the learned men, who had found employment at Rome in the capacity of Papal Secretaries, Abbreviators, etc., and supplied their places by monks. To these fugitives, some of them men marked out for special punishment by the irate pontiff, Piero and his wife extended help, and in many cases maintenance, much to the indignation of the vindictive Pope.

[1] Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, vol. i.; Vespas., *Fior.*, p. 119; Muratori, xx. col. 1110.

Piero's term of power, then, was merely what might be called an "entr'acte" between the splendid spectacular glories of Cosimo's and of Lorenzo's rule. Had health permitted, Piero might certainly have left his mark on his age. He was a man endowed with faculties far from mediocre—faculties, moreover, which he assiduously cultured, as far as suffering would permit, by reading and study. Printing really reached Italy in his days. Maintz, as is well known, had been, if not the birthplace of printing—for Haarlem's claims seem now to be generally admitted—at least the place where the infant art had attained its greatest hold. In 1462 the sack of Maintz by Adolf of Nassau scattered its printers over well-nigh the whole of Europe. Several of these craftsmen came to Italy, where they established themselves first at Subiaco and afterwards in various centres throughout the peninsula. Evidence is now extant showing that Piero, with a far-sightedness inferior to none of his race, wrote to Bernardino Cennini of Florence and John of Maintz, promising not only to take them under his protection, but to provide for them until they obtained a connection. Cennini was not able to accept the offer until 1471, and John of Maintz until the following year—both of them, alas! after Piero had passed away. To Lorenzo, therefore, has been accorded the credit which, properly speaking, belongs to his father.

Piero's work, as a whole, is little more than a preliminary preparation for the greater glory investing his son's epoch. In Cosimo, the Florentines had recognised a great political and diplomatic genius, whose policy had saved them from being overwhelmed by jealous rivals. A greater than Cosimo was now to

arise in the person of his grandson; for view his achievements how we may, there can be no two opinions about the question, that seldom has a more versatile or many-sided genius appeared on this earth than—Lorenzo de' Medici.

CHAPTER V

The Age of Lorenzo de' Medici (Il Magnifico), 1449–1492

Section 1.—*Lorenzo's Early Years*

Popes—Nicholas v., 1447; Pius ii., 1458; Paul ii., 1464

To few men has either the power or the opportunity been given to influence their epoch, intellectually and politically, to a degree so marked as was the lot of Lorenzo de' Medici. One of the most marvellously many-sided of the many-sided men who adorned the Italy of the fifteenth century, he did more to place Florence in the forefront of the world's culture than any other citizen who claimed "Valdarno" as his birthplace. His influence was great because he was in sympathy so catholic with all the varied life of his age and circle.[1] While during the one hour he would be found learnedly discussing the rival claims of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophers with Ficino and Landino, the next might witness him the foremost reveller in the Florentine carnival, crowned with flowers and with the wine-cup in his hand, gaily carolling the *ballate* he had composed for the occasion;

[1] Cf. Symonds, vols. i., ii., and iv.; Roscoe's and Armstrong's *Lives of Lorenzo.*

while the third might behold him surrounded by the leading painters and sculptors of Tuscany discoursing profoundly on the aims and mission of art. Truly a unique personality, at one and the same time the glorious creation and the splendid epitome of the spirit of the Renaissance!

Lorenzo de' Medici was born on 1st January 1449, when the second great period of the Renaissance was nearing its close,—that period of arrangement and translation, the epoch of the formation of the great Italian libraries, the age when in Florence around his grandfather Cosimo, in Rome around Pope Nicholas v., and in Naples around Alfonso the Magnanimous, coteries of the leading Humanists were gathered, engaged in labours which have made posterity eternally their debtors. He was early introduced to the best culture of the time. No sooner was he able to talk distinctly than his mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, placed him under the care of the celebrated Gentile Becchi of Urbino, afterwards Bishop of Arezzo, a man who had acquired his vast learning at one of the most famous centres of Humanistic scholarship in Italy—the Court of Federigo of Montefeltro. Gentile may have been a pedant in some things. He was able, at all events, to instil a love of poetry—Latin and Italian—into the mind of Lorenzo, which eventually bore fruit in the rich harvest of the *Selve d'Amore*, the *Ambra*, the *Eclogues of Corinto*, the *Nencia da Barberino*, etc. As he grew older, Argyropoulos, the Byzantine exile, became his instructor in Greek, while Ficino initiated him into the mysteries of Plato, and Landino into those of Aristotle.[1]

[1] Paulus Jovius, *Elogia*; Poliziano, *Sonetti*.

Lorenzo, in youth as well as in age, was a hard student. With him the pursuit of learning was a passion; and as he had a singularly acute and active mind, though he acquired knowledge easily, he retained it tenaciously. Not only was he a scholar, he was an athlete in addition. Running, leaping, swimming, horsemanship—in all he was proficient. He was one of the best jousters in Florence, a good football player, and the champion of the game of *fives*—called in Tuscany *pallone*. His dogs, his hawks, his horses were in each case the best procurable, and were invariably trained by himself. He had an infinite capacity for taking pains, and to him is attributed the Italian form of the familiar saying—"Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well." In a word, Lorenzo appears to have been one of those rarely gifted natures, the special product of the Renaissance, when it was still possible to master the entire round of human knowledge. Well for him that he lived in the large and spacious age of the Renaissance, and that his free and liberty-loving spirit was not immured in the prison-house of Scholasticism or in the cage of specialism! Lorenzo's genius, if cabined or confined in either way, would assuredly have made lamentable shipwreck of itself.

His portrait by Giorgio Vasari, as it looks down on us from the walls of the Uffizzi Gallery, conveys the impression of a personality in which iron inflexibility of purpose is combined with a sagacious shrewdness almost akin to slyness. The face is long and oval-shaped, the nose inclined if anything to the snub, the forehead low, but the occiput abnormally developed; the cheek-bones high, while the mouth projects so

much, owing to an osseous formation below the nose, as to approach somewhat to the simian type; the eyes are brown, and, as his friend relates, were singularly soft and winning in their glance, but so weak as to be constantly winking. In stature Lorenzo was tall, with a lithe, muscular figure and dignified carriage and deportment, while in manners he was courteous and affable, accessible to all: "I am a Florentine," he was wont to say, "and a Florentine is a citizen of the world." Though far from being what would be called "a handsome man," for his features were so irregular as to be coarse, he was one who always attracted attention; and though his voice was so hoarse as to be almost harsh in its tones, yet as an orator the excellence of the matter so counterbalanced any trifling defects in the manner, that, in the words of Landino, "one could listen to him a summer's day and curse the necessity that caused him to break off the treat."

From earliest boyhood Lorenzo was exceedingly susceptible to literary and artistic impressions. In Florence, during the early years of his life, Humanism, as we have seen, had been steadily progressing under the encouragement, first of his grandfather Cosimo, and then of his father Piero and his mother Lucrezia. From about 1449, the year of his birth, until 1464, when Cosimo died, the advance in scholarship and general culture was persistent and uniform. All branches of learning had felt the beneficent influence of Cosimo's patronage, and after he died his son and daughter-in-law had carried on the traditions of the great house with a public-spirited munificence that proclaimed them worthy successors of the "Father of his Country."

In youth Lorenzo took as his model his uncle Giovanni, who, if we can gauge possible fulfilment by the potentiality of promise, would have been the greatest of the Medici. The lad noted the cultured ease and dignified affability wherewith Cosimo's favourite son bore himself in his difficult station. Giovanni was able to impress his individuality on the age, without seeming to throw his valetudinarian but still much-beloved elder brother into the shade. Assuredly he was a marvellously gifted youth, who well merited all the panegyrics showered on him by Pope Pius II. (Æneas Sylvius) and the other Humanists who wrote to console the heart-broken father.

Lorenzo, as has been said, studied the springs of his uncle's character. "As he was I wish to be" was his remark to Ficino. "Nay," said the latter, "consider no state a station wherein to remain, but press on to the higher heights beyond." To rival his uncle's fame became Lorenzo's ambition. After he had escaped from the tutelage of pedagogues and preceptors his studies were pursued with even greater intensity than before.

Nor was his prevision regarding his own future at fault. He was early taught to read the political "signs of the times," and he would have been blind indeed had he failed to realise the high mission to which he was called. The demand came suddenly at the last. Lorenzo was summoned to assume the chief power in the Republic of Florence some twenty days before he crossed the Rubicon of his majority. But during his father's lifetime he had shown himself possessed of such outstanding diplomatic ability, more particularly in the manner in which he handled the negotiations arising out of the Milanese-Neapolitan marriage, by

which Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, heir of King Ferrante of Naples, wedded Ippolyta Maria, daughter of Francesco Sforza of Milan, and in the consummate skill wherewith he defeated the machinations of the Pitti-Neroni conspirators, that no apprehension was felt in inviting one so young to accept a charge so responsible.

When Piero died, in December 1469, the Signory of Florence to a man came and entreated Lorenzo to assume the position his father and grandfather had occupied of "First Citizen" of the Republic. That the influence of Tommaso Soderini and the Pitti family were exerted on his behalf is more than probable, yet the singular circumstance is, that of opposition there was none. Lorenzo hesitated, and has been accused of affectation for so doing. Those who urge this charge fail to apprehend the real motives of Lorenzo. His conduct was not dictated by that pseudo-modesty which refuses, only that it may be pressed to adopt some line of action it had intended all through to take. Everything, on the contrary, points to the conviction that Lorenzo's real hesitation resulted from his doubt whether the better course would not be to assume the nominal with the actual rank, and, like Sforza, become a ruler in name as well as in fact. The position of "First Citizen" was one of great anxiety and responsibility. Had it any countervailing advantages? These are not found to be by any means commensurate to the burdens entailed, unless stress is laid upon the fact that holding the position—if such it can be called—his own personal safety, his wealth, and his vast commercial interests were thereby preserved from the attacks of jealous rivals. He had to protect himself, and only in this way could he do so.

But what was the "position"? Very pertinently is the question answered by Mr. Armstrong [1]—

"What this place was it would have been difficult to define in words. It entailed no official position, no State magistracy, the command of not a soldier nor a policeman. No single citizen was subjected to their orders. Ostensibly they were wealthy bankers, and no more. The constitutional executive could ruin them with taxation at its arbitrary will; it could trump up charges and send them into exile, or to the Bargello for execution; it could summon them to the palace and throw them with scant form of trial from the upper windows on the pavement, and many of the citizens would have cried 'Well done!' Yet everyone knew that the nameless position thus offered was that of princes; that the Medici were gradually taking their place among the *Signori naturali*, the born lords of Italy; that the citizen's fortunes, his home and life, were at their mercy, for the electoral boxes were filled with the names of their creatures, while the assessment rolls and the courts of law would be unscrupulously used to favour or to ruin. The position, however, was as dangerous as it was tempting, and its acceptance by a youth of twenty who had intimate knowledge of its dangers required some nerve."

It was the realisation of these dangers and risks—risks which had to be faced without any commensurate return even if they were successfully surmounted—that led Lorenzo to ask himself whether his position would not be better safeguarded were he ruler of Florence in name as well as in form.

But when he sounded Soderini and his friends about the project he realised the hour had not yet come. His descendants might become Grand Dukes of Tuscany: for his part he would have to remain "First Citizen of

[1] *Lorenzo de' Medici*, chap. iii. p. 86 ("Heroes of the Nations Series").

the Florentine Republic." Accordingly he accepted the invitation of the Signory to assume "the position held by his father and grandfather," as it was vaguely defined in the minute of Council.

This acceptance took place in December 1469, and until April 1492, when he died at the early age of forty-two, he ruled Florence and held "the Balance of Power" in Italy, with a political prevision of well-nigh all adverse contingencies, united to a diplomatic adroitness, which stamp him as one of the greatest of European statesmen. True, he never displayed the Machiavelian craft and cunning of Richelieu or the management of men wherein Mazarin was unequalled, but he excelled both the great cardinals in keen, almost preternatural, insight into the remotest issues of those principles of government in accordance with which he ruled. If he had not Sully's iron inflexibility of purpose, nor Alberoni's patriotic selfishness and cynical disregard of consequences provided his own country were safe, he surpassed both as a marvellous master of expedients for safeguarding his State, surpassed them, in fine, in the exhaustless fertility of his political resources, and in the wonderful rapidity wherewith he could change his entire policy and defeat subtilty with its own weapons.

No easy *rôle* was that he had to play. His grandfather, as we saw, had deviated from the traditional policy of Florence, which had inculcated alliance with Venice against Milan, and had "educated" the people into an acceptance of the new diplomacy, which enjoined an alliance between Florence and Milan against Venice. With supreme skill Lorenzo played the same game on the political chessboard, and literally

made Florence the "Keeper of the Peace of Italy." When his master hand was withdrawn the change became apparent. His worthless son was but the ass masquerading in the skin of the lion,—a man who, to curry favour with Charles VIII. of France, lost in a day what Cosimo and Lorenzo had wrought half a century to gain.

Not as a political ruler, however, is Lorenzo to be the subject of our study, great and glorious though he was in that capacity. In remarking, as has been done above, that his rule lasted for twenty-two years, and that it was characterised by success and progress as regards both the domestic and foreign relations of the "City of the Flower," we really say all there is to say, without going minutely into the details of his State policy. While that was necessary to some extent in the case of Cosimo, because at the outset his Renaissance and his political ideas were very often complementary to each other, no such reason exists in the case of Lorenzo. In his case politics and letters were in most instances kept rigidly apart.

The era of Lorenzo was the Augustan age of Florentine literature and art. It is therefore the chronicle of his work as the Mæcenas of his age that we desire to relate here, only touching on his political career where necessary to cast light on his Renaissance relations.

SECTION 2.—*Lorenzo's Life and Labours between* 1470–1480

POPES—Paul II., 1464; Sixtus IV., 1471

When Lorenzo de' Medici consented to assume the "position" occupied by his father Piero and his grand-

father Cosimo, he was not the raw youth his immature years would lead one to suppose. Although intellectual maturity is reached at an earlier age in the sunny South than in the fog-haunted lands of Northern Europe, Lorenzo had enjoyed a long apprenticeship, before being called to undertake the duties devolving on him as the uncrowned King of Florence. From his thirteenth year, he had been the companion and shared the counsels, first of his grandfather and father, and subsequently of his father alone. From the former especially, he learned many important lessons in statecraft. The matter is open to question, however, if any advice had more far-reaching results or was laid more carefully to heart than this which is contained in more than one of Cosimo's letters: "Never stint your favours to the cause of learning, and cultivate sedulously the friendship of scholars and Humanists." Towards such a course, Lorenzo's inclinations as well as his interests pointed, and, during his life, Florence was the Athens not only of Italy but of Europe as a whole. Here, among many others, were to be found such "Epoch-makers" as Poliziano, Ficino, and Landino, Pico della Mirandola, Leo Battista Alberti, Michael Angelo, Luigi Pulci,—men who glorified their age by crowning it with the nimbus of their genius.

The literary and artistic greatness of Florence was not due, however, to the comparative intellectual poverty of the other States in Italy. Florence was only *primus inter pares*, greatest among many that were great. When the fact is recalled that such contemporaries as Pomponius Lætus, Bartolommeo Sacchi, Molza, Alessandro Farnese (Paul III.), Platina, Sabellicus at Rome; Pontanus, Sannazaro, and Porcello in Naples;

and Pomponasso and Boiardo at Ferrara, were then at or nearing their prime, the position of Florence as the acknowledged centre of European culture was conceded by sense of right alone.[1] Than this nothing proves more emphatically the strides learning had been making. It was no longer the prerogative of the few, but the privilege of the many. From the first, Lorenzo recognised what a strong card he held in the affection and respect of the Italian as well as of the Florentine Humanists.

The great secret of Lorenzo's pre-eminence in European and Italian, as well as in Tuscan politics, lies in the fact that he was able to unite the sources of administrative, legislative, and judicial power in himself. All the public offices in Florence were held by his dependants, and so entirely was the State machinery controlled by him, that we find such men as Louis XI. and the Emperor Maximilian, Alfonso of Naples and Pope Innocent VIII., recognising his authority and appealing to him personally in place of to the Signory, to effect the ends they desired. Such power enabled him to avoid the risks his grandfather Cosimo had been compelled to run to maintain his authority. The Medicean faction was better in hand than in his grandfather's days, and Lorenzo therefore, in playing the *rôle* of the Peacemaker of Italy, at the time when he held the "Balance of Power" through his treaties with Milan, Naples, and Ferrara, could speak with a decision that carried weight, when he found it necessary to threaten a restless "despot" with a political combination that might depose him.

[1] Cf. Walter Pater, *Renaissance*; Vernon Lee, *Euphorion; Leo Battista Alberti* (Biography).

Lorenzo's services to learning were inspired by feelings infinitely more noble than those actuating his political plans. A patriotism as lofty as it was beneficent led him to desire that his country should be in the van of Italian progress in Renaissance studies. His sagacious prevision enabled him to proportion the nature and extent of the benefit he conferred, to the need it was intended to supply. Many statesmen do more harm than good by failing to appreciate this law of supply and demand. They grant more than is required, and that which should have been a boon becomes a burden. Charles v., at the time of the Reformation, on more than one occasion committed this error, as also did Wolsey and Mazarin. Lorenzo, like Richelieu, recognised the value of moderation in giving, and caused every favour to be regarded as a possible earnest of others to come.[1]

The earlier years of his power were associated with many stirring events which exercised no inconsiderable influence on the state of learning. For example, his skilful playing off of Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza of Milan against Ferrante, King of Naples, led to greater attention being directed by the Florentines to Neapolitan and Milanese affairs, with the result that Humanists and artists from both these places paid frequent visits to Florence, where they were welcomed by Lorenzo as his guests. Then when the revolt of the small city of Volterra from Florentine rule was suppressed by Lorenzo's agents, with a rigorous severity that cast a stain on their master's name, owing to many unoffending scholars

[1] Ammirato, iii. 106–108; Muratori, *Ann.*, ix. 508.

having suffered to the extent of losing their all, Lorenzo made noble amends. Not only did he generously assist the inhabitants to repair their losses, not only did he make grants to the local scholars and send them copies of many of the codices in his own library to supply the loss of their books which had been burned by the soldiery, but he purchased large estates in the neighbourhood, that the citizens might benefit by his residence among them. In this way, too, he brought the Volterran scholars into more intimate relations with the Florentine Humanists, and thus contributed to the further diffusion of the benefits of the Renaissance.[1]

All was not plain sailing, however, as regards the progress of the "New Learning." Despite his efforts, Lorenzo could not prevent its development being checked during the Papal-Neapolitan quarrel with Florence. That war originated in a dispute with Pope Sixtus IV., which in reality was not settled as long as the pontiff lived. Next to Alexander VI., and John XXIII. one of the most infamous monsters that ever occupied the "Chair of the Fisherman," was Francesco della Rovere, who, under the title Sixtus IV., kept Italy in a ferment during the whole duration of his pontificate (1471–1484). Were no other proof forthcoming of Lorenzo's marvellous diplomatic genius than this one fact, that he checkmated the political schemes of Sixtus, and finally so neutralised his influence as to render him well-nigh impotent for evil-doing, such an achievement was sufficient to stamp him one of the greatest masters of state-craft Europe has known. In any estimate of his ability we

[1] *Vide* Politian's *Epigrams*; Fabronius in *Vita Lauren.*, i. 39.

must take into account the unsatisfactory character of many of the instruments wherewith he had to achieve his purposes, and also the fact that he had neither a great army at his back with which to enforce the fulfilment of treaty obligations — for Florence never was a city of soldiers—nor had he the prestige of an official position to lend weight to his words. To all intents and purposes he was a private citizen of the Florentine Republic. Yet such was the dynamic power of the man's marvellous personality, and the reputation he had earned, even in his early years, for supreme prescience and far-reaching diplomatic subtilty, that far and wide he was regarded as the greatest force in Italian politics.[1]

Sixtus sallied forth to crush; he returned to the Vatican a crushed and a discredited man, to die of sheer chagrin over his defeat by Lorenzo in his designs upon Ferrara. Reduced to its original elements, the aim of Sixtus was either to make the Papacy hereditary in the person of his nephew Pietro Riario, or, when that failed through the death of the young Carmelite friar, worn out by the excesses of his vicious life, to carve a State for his other nephew,[2] Girolamo Riario, out of the lands of the Church. While prosecuting this nefarious purpose, he secretly purchased Imola from the Duke of Milan, a town which Lorenzo had been anxious to secure from the Duke, as thereby Florence, in the words of Mr. Armstrong, would have

[1] Von Reumont, *Lorenzo von Medici*, ii. p. 320.

[2] Giuliano della Rovere, afterwards Pope Julius II., was a third nephew, but meantime the pontiff had nothing to do with him. The youth was considered to be silly. But it was like the madness feigned by Ulysses.

a position on the main southern road, would be within easy distance of the Adriatic, and would thus be able to draw much closer the connection with her traditional clients the Manfredi of Faenza. Imola could readily be brought into touch with the Tuscan Romagna, and from the town there lay a practicable pass across the Appenines.

The Medicean bank did everything to prevent the consummation of the sale, and was able to pinch the Papacy as regards the sale money. Lorenzo, however, found it impossible to prevent Girolamo Riario from securing Imola, and presently the fact became evident that he had designs on Faenza and Forli as well. Then followed the memorable dispute in 1472–1473, over the Bishopric of Pisa, when the Pope's nominee, Francesco Salviati, was refused possession of his See, Pisa being one of the Tuscan towns under the control of Florence. To this Sixtus retaliated by seeking the friendship of Ferrante of Naples, a move Lorenzo anticipated by forming the league between Florence, Milan, and Venice. This league thoroughly alarmed both the Pope and Ferrante, and on the latter visiting Rome in 1475 a Papal-Neapolitan alliance was formed.

Even then, hostilities might not have broken out had the young Duke of Milan not been assassinated in 1476, leaving an infant heir. This entailed a long minority, with all its dangers, and the apprehensions regarding these were not fanciful, inasmuch as Lodovico Sforza, uncle of the baby duke, usurped the position under pretext of acting as regent. These crimes were plainly responsible for the Pazzi conspiracy in 1478 against the Medici themselves, a conspiracy which resulted in Giuliano, the younger brother o

Lorenzo, being murdered in the Cathedral, during mass, on the Sunday before Ascension, while Lorenzo himself was slightly wounded. That Sixtus and his nephew were accessories before the fact is now regarded as unquestionable.[1] The vengeance taken by the enraged Florentines on the conspirators, their relatives, friends, and property, was terrible; the innocent, alas! being sacrificed indiscriminately with the guilty. The Archbishop of Pisa, Francesco Salviati, had entered eagerly into the scheme, and although his sacred office prevented him from actually assisting in the deed, he was present in the Cathedral until the signal was given for the perpetration of the deed, when he left the building to secure the Palazzo Pubblico. He was therefore summarily hanged with the others from the windows of the civic buildings. Sixtus made the execution, or the "murder" as he called it, of Salviati, his pretext for calling on his allies to make war on Florence. When he saw, however, that this action was only throwing the city more completely than ever into the arms of the Medici, he changed his tactics and said he had no quarrel with "his well-beloved children of Florence," but only with "that son of iniquity and child of perdition, Lorenzo de' Medici," and those who had aided and abetted him, among whom the Humanists were expressly mentioned. Against Lorenzo and his associates a brief of excommunication was launched, and the city was urged to regain the Papal favour by surrendering the offenders.[2]

The result might have been predicted. The "brief"

[1] Cf. Muratori, *Ann.*, ix. 526; Mach., *Hist.*, bk. viii.

[2] Raffaele da Volterra, in *Comm. Urban Giog.*, 138; Ammirato, iii. 119.

only tended to knit the bonds of association closer between Lorenzo and the "City of the Flower," while the Humanists to a man rallied round their patron. Even the choleric Filelfo, now a very old man, who had been on anything but friendly terms with the Medici, addressed two bitter satires to Sixtus, in which the Pope was styled the real aggressor, while the great Humanist offered to write a history of the whole transaction, that posterity might know the true facts. The only power which gave its adhesion to Sixtus was Naples, while Venice, Ferrara, and Milan declared for Florence.

Thus commenced that tedious war which not only ruined so many Florentine merchants but retarded the cause of learning so materially. When the people were groaning under heavy taxes, when every coin which Lorenzo could scrape together, had to be poured out to pay the *condottieri*, or soldiers of fortune, by whom the battles of Florence were fought, there was of course but short commons for the Humanists who had made Florence their home. Many of those adapted themselves to circumstances, but others, to whom money was their god, left the banks of the Arno for those southern cities where the pinch of scarcity did not prevail.

In this campaign the Florentines gained but little prestige. The larger share of the cost was quietly suffered by their allies to fall on the city of bankers. The Milanese were occupied with their own affairs, owing to the *coup d'état* accomplished by Lodovico Sforza. The Duke of Ferrara withdrew owing to some disagreement with the *condottieri* engaged by Lorenzo. The Venetians only despatched a small contingent

under Carlo Montone and Diefebo d'Anguillari; accordingly, in the end, the whole burden of the struggle fell on Florence. The Magnifico's position gradually became precarious, inasmuch as many persons declared the war to be in reality a personal quarrel between Pope Sixtus and the Medici. Complaints began to be heard that the public treasury was exhausted and the commerce of the city ruined, while the citizens were burdened with oppressive taxes. Lorenzo had the mortification of being told that sufficient blood had been shed, and that it would be expedient for him rather to devise some means of effecting a peace, than of making further preparations for the war.[1]

In these circumstances, and confronted by one of the most dangerous crises of his whole life, Lorenzo rose to the occasion and effected a solution of the difficulty by daring to perform what was undoubtedly one of the bravest acts ever achieved by a diplomatist. By some statesmen it might be condemned as foolhardy, by others as quixotic. Its very foolhardiness and quixotry fascinated the man it was intended to influence, the bloodthirsty, cruel, and pitiless Ferrante of Naples, who was restrained from crime by the fear neither of God nor man, and who had actually slain the *condottiere* Piccinino, when he visited him under a safe-conduct from the monarch's best ally. But the Renaissance annals are filled with the records of men and women whose natures are marvellous studies of contrasted and contradictory traits Such was the Neapolitan tyrant. While a monster in much, he had his vulnerable points. He was ambitious to pose as

[1] Cf. Roscoe, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, chap. iv.

a friend of the "New Learning," and he knew that Lorenzo was not only the most munificent patron, but also one of the most illustrious exponents of the Renaissance principles.

Although his enemy, Ferrante received Lorenzo with every demonstration of respect and satisfaction. He lost sight of the hostile diplomatist in the great Humanist. Two Neapolitan galleys were sent to conduct him to Naples, and he was welcomed on landing with much pomp. Never did Lorenzo's supreme diplomatic genius, never did his versatile powers as a statesman, as a scholar, as a patron of letters, and as a brilliant man of the world blaze forth in more splendid effulgence than during his three months' stay in Naples. Though opposed by all the papal authority and resources; though Sixtus by turns threatened, cajoled, entreated, promised, in order to prevent Lorenzo having any success, the successor of St. Peter was beaten all along the line, and the Magnifico carried away with him a treaty signed and sealed, which practically meant that henceforth Naples and the Papacy would be in antagonistic camps.[1]

It was the Renaissance card which won the trick. With startling boldness, yet with consummate art, Lorenzo played the game of flattering Ferrante. No ordinary adulation, however, would have had success with the Neapolitan Phaleris. He was too strong-minded a man for anything of that kind. But to be hailed by the great Renaissance patron of the period, by one also who was himself one of the leading Humanists, as a brother Humanist and a fellow-patron of learning, was a delicate incense to his vanity which he

[1] Armstrong, *Lorenzo*, p. 176; Roscoe, *Lorenzo*, p. 166.

could not resist. He liked to be consulted on matters of literary moment, and when he blundered, Lorenzo was too shrewd a student of human nature to correct him.

Another fact in Lorenzo's favour was that he had the warm support not only of the beautiful Ippolyta Maria, daughter of Cosimo's friend, Francesco Sforza of Milan, and now wife of Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, King Ferrante's heir, as well as of Don Federigo, the monarch's younger son, who, along with Ippolyta, was a friend to the "New Learning," but he also had the whole body of the Neapolitan Humanists on his side, scarce one of whom but had experienced in some form or another the Medicean bounty. Such powerful advocacy was not without its influence in bringing about the result; while Ferrante more and more realised that if the Florentine Medici were crushed he would have no ally to whom to look for help, when the inevitable shuffle of the political cards took place on the death of Sixtus.[1]

In February 1480, therefore, Lorenzo returned in triumph to Florence, to be received with rapture by his fellow-citizens. Had he delayed a few months longer, his visit and his *ad misericordiam* appeals would not have been needed. In August of that year Keduk Achmed, one of the Turkish Sultan's (Mohammed II.) ablest generals, besieged and took the city of Otranto.[2] In face of the common danger to all Italy, Sixtus was compelled to accept the treaty made by Ferrante with Lorenzo, and a general peace ensued. The decade accordingly closed with an absolution for

[1] Von Reumont, *Lorenzo*, vol. ii. p. 330.

[2] In the extreme south-east of Italy, the ancient Hydruntum.

all offences granted by the Pope to Florence, conditional on the Tuscan Republic contributing its share to the expenses of the military preparations to resist the invasion of the Turk.[1]

Notwithstanding the war the progress of the Renaissance during the first decade of Lorenzo's rule was very marked. To the rapid diffusion of printing this was largely due. Lorenzo had not imbibed the prejudices against the new art entertained by Cosimo and Federigo of Montefeltro. He looked at the practical not the sentimental side of the question as regards the new invention. Having seen that the press could throw off, in a few days, scores of copies of any work, of which it took an amanuensis months to produce one; also that the scholars of all Italy could be furnished almost immediately, and at a low price, with the texts of any MSS. they desired, while they had to wait months for a limited number of copies whose cost was well-nigh prohibitive, he supported the new invention from the outset. Having resolved to further his father's efforts to establish printing in Florence, he stimulated the local goldsmith, Bernardo Cennini, to turn his attention to type-casting in metal, and even agreed to pay him an annual grant from the year 1471 until he had fairly settled himself in business. Nor did he confine his favours to him. John of Maintz and Nicholas of Breslau, who arrived in Florence, the former in 1472 and the latter in 1477, also participated in his open-hearted liberality. Printing struck its roots deep into the Tuscan community and flourished excellently. Though the Florentine craft never attained

[1] *Pii II. Commentarii.* Cf. also Gregorovius, bk. xiii. chap. iii.; Sugenheim, *Geschichte der Entstehung und Ausbildung des Kirchenstaates*, p. 97.

the reputation of the Venetian Aldi and Asolani, the Giunti of Rome, the Soncini of Fano, the Stephani of Paris, and Froben of Basle, it had the name, for a time at least, of being one of the most accurate of all the presses.

To Lorenzo it owed this celebrity. At an early date he perceived that the new art would be of little value if there were not careful press readers. He was therefore amongst the first to induce scholars of distinction to engage in this task. For example, he enlisted the aid of Cristoforo Landino, who in his *Disputationes Camaldunenses* had really inaugurated the science of textual criticism, by urging that a careful comparison of the various codices should constitute the preliminary step in any reproduction of the classics. Landino's work on Virgil and Horace merits the warmest praise. Lorenzo also impressed Poliziano into the work, whose labours in marking the various readings, in adding *scholia* and "notes" illustrative of the text of Catullus, Propertius, Ovid, etc., were of the utmost value. To Lorenzo and to his younger brother Giuliano, another great Humanist, Giorgio Merula of Milan, dedicated his *Plautus*, published in Venice in 1472, showing at how early an age the Magnifico had taken his place among the recognised patrons of the Italian Renaissance.

We ought not, moreover, to omit mention of another achievement of Lorenzo, though performed in a sphere of effort lying outside the strict limits of our Renaissance survey. Seeing it was the "Revival of Letters," however, which induced the revival of the cultivation of the vernacular Italian literature, surely it is not out of place to refer to it here? Early in life Lorenzo

became imbued with the conviction that his native tongue was unsurpassed as a medium for "the expression of noble thoughts in noble numbers." Not only did he encourage others to study Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, but by following out his own precepts he became one of the great Italian poets. His *Selve d'Amore*, his *Corinto*, his *Ambra*, his *La Nencia da Barberino*, his *Laude*, his *Sonetti*, his *Canzoni*, etc., are all poems that live in the Italian literature of to-day. Not as a man ashamed of the vernacular, and forced to use it because he can command no better, does Lorenzo write. "He is sure of the justice of his cause, and determined by precept and example and by the prestige of his princely rank to bring the literature he loves into repute again."[1]

But of these poems we cannot here take further note. By the scholars of the Renaissance such work was looked askance at. If they did produce any of these "trifles," as they were called, they almost blushed to own them, and were ashamed to communicate them to each other.[2] That he dared to be natural says much for Lorenzo, and it was largely due to his encouragement that Cristoforo Landino undertook his great work on "Dante," to which we owe so much to-day.

In conjunction with his patronage of printing there was no line of effort in which Lorenzo did more real service than in collecting MSS. and antiquities, and in making them practically public property. On this account he is styled by Niccolo Leonicino, "Lorenzo de Medici, the great patron of learning in this age, whose messengers are dispersed through every part of the

[1] Symonds, *Renaissance*, vol. iv. p. 323.
[2] Roscoe, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. 240.

earth for the purpose of collecting books on every science, and who has spared no expense in procuring for your use and that of others who may devote themselves to similar studies the materials necessary for your purpose." The agents he employed travelled through Italy, Greece, Europe, and the East,—Hieronymo Donato, Ermolao Barbaro, and Paolo Cortesi being the names of some of his most trusted "commissioners." But the coadjutor whose aid he principally relied on, to whom he committed the care and arrangement of his vast museum and great library, was Poliziano, who himself made frequent excursions throughout Europe, Asia, and Northern Africa to discover and purchase such remains of antiquity as suited the purposes of his patron. Another successful agent, though at a later date, was Giovanni Lascaris, who twice journeyed into the East in search of MSS. and curios. In the second of these he brought back upwards of 200 copies of valuable codices from the monasteries on Mount Athos.

To still another service rendered by Lorenzo to the cause of the Renaissance attention must be called—the founding of the Florentine Academy for the study of Greek. This institution, distinct, be it remembered, from the *Uffiziali dello Studio*, or High-School, exercised a marvellous influence on the progress of the "New Learning." Accordingly, as Roscoe says, succeeding scholars have been profuse in their acknowledgments to Lorenzo, who first formed the establishment from which, to use their own classical figure, as from the Trojan horse, so many illustrious champions have sprung, and by means of which the knowledge of the Greek tongue was extended not only throughout

Italy but throughout Europe as well, from all the countries of which numerous pupils flocked to Florence —pupils who afterwards carried the learning they had received to their native lands.[1]

Of this institution the first public professor was Joannes Argyropoulos,[2] who, having enjoyed the patronage of Cosimo and Piero, and directed the education of Lorenzo, was selected by the latter as the fittest person to be the earliest occupant of the chair. During his tenure of it he sent out such pupils as Poliziano, Donato Acciaiuoli, Janus Pannonius, and the famous German Humanist, Reuchlin. Argyropoulos did not hold the appointment long. His death took place at Rome in 1471, and he was succeeded first by Theodore of Gaza, and then by Chalcondylas. Poliziano certainly discharged the duties of the office frequently, but at first only as *locum tenens*. He was then almost incessantly engaged in travelling for his patron in Greece and Asia Minor, and was too valuable a coadjutor to be tied down to the routine of teaching until he had completed his work. During the next decade he became the "Professor," and discharged the duties with a genius and an adaptability to circumstances that won for him the admiration and love of all his students.

This decade was also remarkable for the commencement of the devotion to the cultivation of literary style, a pursuit yet to reach its culmination in Poliziano in Florence, and in Bembo and Sadoleto in Rome. Originality gradually gave place to conventionality, until men actually came to prefer the absurdities of

[1] Roscoe, *Lorenzo*, p. 253.

[2] Acciaiuoli ap Hod *de Græcis Illustr.*, 202 ; *Politian in Miscell.*, cap. 1.

Ciceronianism and a cold colourless adherence to hard-and-fast rules of composition, to a work throbbing with the pulsation of virile life. Humanism was beginning to take flight from Italy, to find a home and a welcome beyond the Alps.

Section 3.—*Lorenzo's Life and Labours between* 1481–1492

Popes—Sixtus iv., 1471; Innocent viii., 1484

The final decade of Lorenzo's life constituted the midsummer bloom of the Tuscan Renaissance, the meridian of the intellectual and artistic supremacy of Florence.[1] In Lorenzo it found its fullest expression. He was typical of its spiritual as well as of its moral meaning; typical, too, of that mental unrest which sought escape from the pressing problems of an enigmatic Present, by reverting to the study of a classic Past whose ethical, social, and political difficulties were rarely of a complex character, but concerned themselves principally with what may be termed the elementary verities of man's relations to the Deity and to his fellows.

Lorenzo's amazing versatility has been pronounced a fault by some who believed they detected in him the potential capacity of rivalling Dante, Petrarch, and Ariosto on their own ground, had he only conserved his energies. That is a foolish supposition. Lorenzo's many-sidedness was but the reflection in himself, as the most accurate mirror of the time, of all

[1] Cf. *Savonarola*, by the Rev. G. M'Hardy, D.D., in this Series; also Guicciardini, chap. i.

that wondrous susceptibility to beauty, that eager craving after the realisation of the τό Καλον—the Good —so characteristic of the best Hellenic genius, whether we study it in the dramas of Sophocles, or the *Republic* of Plato, or in the statesmanship of Pericles. If Lorenzo had resembled his grandfather and concentrated his energies upon finance and politics, there might have been a line of reigning Medicean princes in Florence half a century earlier than actually was the case, but Europe would have been distinctly the loser by the absence of the greatest personal force making for culture which characterised the Renaissance.

This last decade of Lorenzo's life—from his thirty-first to his forty-second year—was memorable in many respects. In the year 1481 he was again exposed to the danger of assassination. Battista Frescobaldi and two assistants in the Church of the Carmeli, and again on Ascension Day, made an attempt to stab him, but were frustrated by the vigilance of Lorenzo's friends. There is no doubt that this second attempt was also instigated by Girolamo Riario, the nephew of Sixtus IV.[1] Thereafter Lorenzo never moved out without a strong bodyguard of friends and adherents,—a precaution rendered necessary by the repeated plots that were being hatched against him by his enemies.

No sooner had the presence of the Turks at Otranto, in the extreme south-east of Italy, been rendered a thing of the past by the surrender of the Moslem garrison to the Duke of Calabria in September 1481, than the peninsula was again ranged in opposing camps, by the attempt of the Venetians, assisted by Sixtus and his nephew, to dispossess Ercole d'Este,

[1] Ammirato, lib. xxv.

Duke of Ferrara, of his dominions. The duke had married the daughter of Ferdinand, King of Naples, an alliance which, by strengthening him, gave on that account great offence to the Venetians. They therefore sought to provoke him by insisting on their monopoly of the manufacture of salt in North Italy, and by building a fortress on a part of the Ferrarese territory, which they pretended was within the limits of their own. When he remonstrated, they declined to remove it. In vain he appealed to Sixtus. The latter was one of the wolves waiting to devour him. He then turned to Lorenzo. To the inexpressible chagrin of Venice and of Sixtus, the Magnifico promptly espoused his cause, formed an alliance with Ferdinand and other States, and before the Pope and the Venetians were aware he had moved, they found themselves confronted by Naples, Florence, Milan, Bologna, Mantua, and Faenza. The allies were commanded by Federigo of Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, while the Venetian-Papal troops were placed under Ruberto Malatesta of Rimini. In this campaign, however, Lorenzo was really the master-spirit. Although successes were won on both sides, a more than usually tragic complexion was given to the war by the death of the two commanders of the opposing forces. They had been friends from youth, and such a trifle as the fact that they were hired to fight against each other never disturbed the tenour of their mutual regard. Armstrong says no more than the truth when he remarks—

"It was a pathetic coincidence. The two rival generals had bequeathed to each other the care of their children and

estates, a characteristic illustration of the easy good-fellowship in this game of Italian war."[1]

The war dragged on with varying results until Lorenzo played his reserve card. He induced the Slavic Archbishop of Carniola, who, visiting Rome as the Emperor Frederick's envoy, had been shocked by the shameless immorality of the Pope's life, to begin an agitation for a General Council. In this he was supported by several of the rulers in Northern Italy and Eastern Europe. The move was so far successful. The Pope became alarmed, and hurriedly broke off his alliance with Venice, on the plea that the prevention of fresh schism in the Church must take precedence of every other consideration. The real fact of the matter was, he dreaded the fate of Pope John XXIII., for he knew the actions of his nephew Girolamo Riario would not stand Conciliar examination. Moreover, his other nephew Giuliano della Rovere, afterwards Pope Julius II., a bitter enemy to Girolamo, and Lorenzo's warm friend, had, during the disgrace of his cousin, gained the Pope's ear and told him some plain but wholesome truths regarding the unpleasant consequences of a permanent rupture with Lorenzo. All these considerations induced Sixtus to yield and leave Venice to prosecute the war alone. This it did against a quadruple alliance, for the Pope, when the haughty Republic of the lagoons refused to disgorge its Ferrarese prey at his orders, promptly changed sides, and was as keen against the aggressor as he had previously been favourable to it. The Venetians sustained two severe defeats, while their fleet was almost shat-

[1] *Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. 189.

tered by a storm. The pecuniary strain was beyond their resources longer to maintain. They therefore resorted to the customary project of inducing some other power to intervene. In this case they took the step of inviting the Duke of Orleans to lay claim to the dukedom of Milan, and the Duke of Lorraine to the throne of Naples. The move was successful as regards Ludovico of Milan; he withdrew from the alliance, and much against the wish of the other allies the peace of Bagnolo was concluded in August 1484. To Sixtus the news came as the knell of his dearest hopes. He gave way to one wild outburst of passion, in which he cursed all who had been engaged in making peace, then apoplexy supervened, and within a few hours he was a corpse. He was succeeded by Cardinal Cybo, a warm friend towards the Medici, and one who had such a profound admiration for the genius of Lorenzo in state-craft, that he seldom took any step without consulting him, though unfortunately he did not always follow the Magnifico's advice.

If no one else reaped honour and glory from this Ferrarese war, Lorenzo undoubtedly did so. By both sides the fact was admitted that he had acted throughout as a far-seeing, sagacious diplomatist, who, while giving pre-eminence, as was natural, to the welfare of his own State, had sought to conserve the cause of letters, even amid the turmoil incident upon the collision of political interests. He had proved the friend even of the enemies of his own country, when once they had passed from the scene of conflict, as, for example, when he dared Girolamo Riario to raise a finger in the direction of dispossessing the son of the Pope's general Ruberto Malatesta, of his Rimini estates. He was the

friend of the oppressed everywhere, and in more cases than one his powerful protection saved the children of his friends from being robbed by powerful relatives. This connection between Florence, Naples, Milan, Rome, and Ferrara tended to the promotion of intellectual intercourse between them. As printing was now being briskly prosecuted all over Northern and Central Italy,[1] the interchange of literature went on ceaselessly amongst them.

This, however, was Lorenzo's last great war. True, he was implicated in the prolonged quarrel between the Papacy and King Ferrante of Naples, yet it was more as a mediator between the two antagonists, than as the ally of the last-named that he took part in it; although, as Armstrong points out, he paid for the services of Trivulsio and 400 cross-bowmen, that by enabling the Neapolitans to check San Severino, the leader of the Papal-Venetian troops, he might induce Innocent VIII. to lose heart and retire from the struggle.

Lorenzo, during the last six years of his life, or, to speak more definitely, after the peace of Bagnolo, had become in Italian, as he was rapidly becoming in European politics, the master-spirit that inspired the moves on the diplomatic chess-board.[2] In the mind of the historical student, whose attention is directed to this period, admiration and wonder go hand in hand as we contemplate the marvellous sagacity and prevision

[1] We might almost say all over Italy, for a press was established at Reggio as early as 1470.

[2] Desjardins, *Negociations Diplomatiques de la France avec Toscane*, vol. i. pp. 170–176; and Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Lettres et Negociations de Philippe de Comines*, vol. i. pp. 187–198.

of the man, together with the skill wherewith he made Florence—the weakest from a military point of view of the five greater Italian powers—the one which exercised the most preponderating influence upon the affairs of the peninsula. His supreme genius conceived and consummated the great scheme for ensuring the peace of Italy by a Triple Alliance of the three larger States —Florence, Milan, and Naples—against the other two, Venice and the Papacy. As showing how entirely it was dependent upon him, the Alliance was operative only so long as he was alive to bind the antagonistic forces of Naples and Milan together by the link of his own personal influence. He, in a word, was the subtle acid holding in chemical combination many mutually repellent substances. When his influence was withdrawn by death within a few months they had all fallen apart, the Triple Alliance was forgotten and Italy was doomed.[1] Even by those with whom he was nominally at war he was resorted to for advice. He it was that kept Innocent VIII. from taking up a position that would have rendered the Papacy ridiculous in the eyes of Europe, when he sought to threaten Naples with consequences he was powerless to inflict.

Many writers have accused Lorenzo of cowardice, of pusillanimity, of want of political resolution on account of this very course of action, namely, that he assisted the enemies of Florence to extricate themselves from their dilemmas. Such criticism fails entirely to understand both the aim and the scope of his policy. He desired to keep Italy for the Italians. His clear-

[1] Niccolo Valori, *Vita di Lorenzo*; Von Reumont, *Lorenzo*, vol. i. p. 433.

sighted sagacity saw nothing but danger in the plans of Ludovico of Milan to invite the French King into Italy, or in those of Venice to encourage the Duke of Lorraine to press his claims upon Milan. The intervention of either France or Spain in Italy was, in his idea, fraught only with dire disaster. Fain would he have patched up the quarrel between Naples and the Papacy by mutual concessions, because he foresaw what would happen if the colossal northern powers had their cupidity aroused regarding Italy, and learned how defenceless she really was. Because he foresaw so clearly the horrors of the invasion of 1494 and 1527, he acted as he did, even towards those who were enemies of Florence. His alarm appears in the letter, dated July 1489, which he addressed to his ambassador in Rome—

"I dislike these Ultramontanes and barbarians beginning to interfere in Italy. We are so disunited and so deceitful that I believe that nothing but shame and loss would be our lot; recent experience may serve to foretell the future."[1]

How true a prophet he was, the subsequent course of Italian history revealed!

Anxious though the situation was, crucial though many of the problems he had to solve undoubtedly were, yet the statement may be accepted as approximately true, that the last three or four years of Lorenzo's life were spent amidst profound peace—at least as far as Florence was concerned. Roscoe's picture is highly coloured, but not over-coloured—

"At this period the city of Florence was at its highest degree of prosperity. The vigilance of Lorenzo had secured

[1] Armstrong's *Lorenzo*, p. 228.

it from all apprehensions of external attack; and his acknowledged disinterestedness and moderation had almost extinguished that spirit of dissension for which it had been so long remarkable. The Florentines gloried in their illustrious citizen, and were gratified by numbering in their body a man who wielded in his hand the fate of nations and attracted the respect and admiration of all Europe; . . . the administration of justice engaged his constant attention, and he carefully avoided giving rise to an idea that he was himself above the control of the law." [1]

And Guicciardini adds—

"This season of tranquillity was prosperous beyond any that Italy had experienced during the long course of a thousand years. . . . Abounding in men eminent in the administration of public affairs, skilled in every honourable science and every useful art, it stood high in the estimation of foreign nations. Which extraordinary felicity, acquired at many different opportunities, several circumstances contributed to preserve; but among the rest no small share of it was by general consent ascribed to the industry and the virtue of Lorenzo de' Medici, a citizen who rose so far above the mediocrity of a private station that he regulated by his counsels the affairs of Florence, then more important by its situation, by the genius of its inhabitants, and the promptitude of its resources, than by the extent of its dominions; and who having obtained the implicit confidence of the Roman pontiff, Innocent VIII., rendered his name great and his authority important in the affairs of Italy." [2]

Though he had never allowed the demands of civic affairs to interfere with his interest in the

[1] Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. 234.
[2] Guicciardini, *Istoria Fiorentina*, p. 227.

progress of the Renaissance, war-time, as we have said, is not favourable to the cultivation of letters. While the connection between the States during the course of hostilities undoubtedly promoted the increase of mutual interest in each other's intellectual development, the fact that the Magnifico had to disburse enormous sums for the prosecution of the campaigns necessarily limited his ability to extend the same princely patronage to the cause of learning. But with the conclusion of peace he resumed the original scale of his benefactions, and the last four years of his life were perhaps the most fruitful of all in sterling good achieved in the fostering of the Renaissance.

He encouraged the printers to double their output: he munificently assisted such undertakings as the first edition of Homer,[1] edited by the famous scholars Demetrius Chalcondyles and Demetrius Cretensis, as well as other editions of the classics prepared by Poliziano, Marullus, and others. In the final estimate of his influence upon his age in the next section we hope to show that his aim was as pure as the prosecution of its realisation was determined. He encouraged foreigners to come to Florence to study Greek, and when their funds failed them, in many cases he generously entertained them at his own expense. Grocyn and Linacre, as well as Reuchlin, testify to the wise generosity of the great Magnifico, and all three declare that to him, more than to any other man, the Renaissance owed not only its development, but even the character it assumed in Italy in the second last decade of the fifteenth century.

[1] Published at Florence in 1488, and dedicated to Lorenzo's son Piero.

At his villas of Careggi, Caffagiuolo, Poggio-a-Cajano, Agnana, and Volterra he regularly entertained his friends. His table continued all his life to be an open one. While there were certain intimate friends whom he expected every day, others had the day of the week named when they were asked to repair to the hospitable board, while a third class were invited to appear whenever they felt inclined. No one with any pretensions to scholarship but had a friend in Lorenzo de' Medici. "I feel a fraternal regard for all men who love letters as I love them" was his remark to Ficino.

The end came when he was literally in his prime. Only forty-two years of age—he might reasonably have looked forward to many years of active work and the enjoyment of his honours! But Lorenzo, although not a vicious was a pleasure-loving man, and he had drained the cup of enjoyment to the very lees. His constitution was undermined by worry and late vigils, by the very intensity of interest wherewith he had devoted himself to the pleasures of the moment. Accordingly, late in 1491 he began to feel the gout, from which he had suffered for some years, becoming so troublesome that he was unable for the duties devolving on him. He had lost his wife, Clarice Orsini, in July 1487, at a time when he was absent at the sulphur-baths of Filetta,[1] striving to obtain relief from pain, therefore his last years were lonely indeed. Life had lost its relish to the dying Magnifico. The only thing over which he showed a flash of the old interest was in March 1492, when his son Giovanni (afterwards Leo X.), on being made a cardinal by Innocent VIII., was invested with the *insignia* in the Abbey Church of Fiesole.

[1] Near Siena.

Although then within a month of his end, although, moreover, so weak that he was unable to attend the Investiture Mass, or to head his table at the banquet which followed, he caused himself to be carried in a litter into the hall, where he publicly paid reverence to his son as a Prince of the Church. He then embraced him as a father, and gave him his paternal blessing. That done, and after addressing a few words of welcome to his guests collectively, he was slowly borne back to his chamber to die. Never more was he seen in public.

His ruling passion was, however, strong in death. In place of surrounding himself with clergy, his last hours were spent with the Humanists and scholars he had loved so well. To his beautiful villa of Careggi, and to that room facing the south which he called his own, he retired, and summoned Ficino, Poliziano, and Pico della Mirandola to bear him company until he dipped his feet in the River of Death. They discussed many things, but principally the consolations afforded by philosophy. Then they reverted to the subject of the classics, and to the valuable codices which Lascaris was bringing back from Greece.[1]

But hope at last burned low, and the physicians had to confess that the case was beyond their skill. How rudimentary as regards medical science that skill was, may be judged from the fact that the staple remedy prescribed by the great Milanese doctor, Lazaro da Ficino, who had been called in to consult with Lorenzo's own medical man, Pier Leoni of Spoleto, was a potion compounded of crushed pearls and jewels. As might have been expected, such a treatment accelerated rather than retarded the disease.

[1] Fabronius in *Vita Laur.*, i. 196.

The last hours of Lorenzo, and particularly his historic interview with Savonarola, have often been described, and are to this day the subject of debate. There are two sides to every story, and this one of the last visit of the haughty Prior of San Marco's to the dying Magnifico is no exception. Poliziano relates the incident in one form, the followers of Savonarola in another; but neither report is absolutely authentic. Suffice it for us that Benedetto, writing a week after the Magnifico's death, says of the matter: "Our dear friend and master died so nobly, with all the patience, the reverence, the recognition of God which the best of holy men and a soul divine could show, with words upon his lips so kind that he seemed a new St. Jerome." Perhaps the most reasonable attitude to assume towards the problem, is that Lorenzo died as he lived, feeling that strange restless curiosity as to what was summed up in the idea of a "future life," which he had manifested all his days: "If I believe aught implicitly," he is reported to have said in earlier years to Alberti, "I believe in Plato's doctrine of immortality in the *Phædo*, for religion is too much a matter of temperament, for us to lay down hard-and-fast rules about it." Lorenzo outwardly conformed in his dying hours to the rites of the Catholic Church. He received the *viaticum* kneeling, he repeated the responses in an earnest and fervent tone, and then when he felt that the grains in the hour-glass of life were running out he pressed a crucifix to his lips, and so passed within the veil.[1] As a Humanist he had been reared, as a Humanist he had lived and laboured, as a Humanist he died, maintaining to the

[1] April 8, 1492.

very last his interest in those studies which it had been his life's passion to pursue.

The sun of the Florentine Renaissance had set for ever!

Section 4.—*Estimate of Lorenzo's influence on the Renaissance*

Popes—Paul II., 1464; Sixtus IV., 1471; Innocent VIII., 1484

To estimate adequately the value of all Lorenzo achieved on behalf of the Renaissance would require a volume, not a mere section in a chapter. There is space for little more than a cursory résumé of the chief results of his versatile activity.

Lorenzo, we would again seek to remind the reader, was at one and the same time the production and the epitome of his age. To a far greater extent he was moulded by the epoch which produced him than his grandfather Cosimo by his. The evolution of culture had refined the somewhat coarse intellectual fibre of Cosimo into the subtly sensitive, artistic temperament of Lorenzo, whose sympathetic affinity with all forms of exoteric or material beauty constituted so marked a trait in his nature.[1]

Strange though the statement may appear, it was the latter who possessed the more grossly material mind of the two. Cosimo in his last years sought surcease from the crushing *Weltschmerz* which seemed to affect all the great Humanists of the Renaissance era, by turning to the Platonic ethics, and along with Marsiglio Ficino, working out a system of philosophico-religious

[1] *Epistolæ Angeli Politiani*, lib. ii.

faith and practice which, though it differed not a little from that inculcated by Mother Church, was nevertheless based upon it. Lorenzo, on the other hand, endeavoured to find in the delights of poetry, architecture, painting and sculpture, in the works of the great masters of his own and preceding epochs, and finally in the exquisite scenery around his various villas, distraction from the haunting sense of the utter worthlessness of life. In a word, it was Cosimo who was the Idealist and Lorenzo who was the Realist.

Although Lorenzo, at death, turned with almost despairing eagerness to the consolations of the Church to relieve his overpowering depression, he did so not from any spiritual craving within him for fellowship with the Unseen, but simply, as he said, because "death induced such a superstitious feeling of loneliness that he was glad to do anything to banish it." This frame of mind was akin to what many of his fellow-Humanists experienced in their last hours. They had sacrificed their Christian faith to the pagan idea of absolute individual liberty, and they had to pay the price!

The best Hellenic thought was non-religious, or, in other words, was divorced from the outward and orthodox spiritual life of the nation. There was in Greece no rigid ceremonial law as to sacrifices and observances. Every district, nay, almost every town, had its tutelary deity and its special mode of worship. The religion of Greece, even in the early days of the historic epoch, was both doctrinally and ceremonially in a state of chaos.[1] The greatest intellects among the

[1] Cf. Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, p. 230; Voigt, *Wiederbelebung*, pp. 414–427.

sons of Hellas were in antagonism to the recognised faith. Æschylus and Euripides, among its tragic writers, openly scoffed at the anomalies of the polytheistic worship. Socrates laid down his life rather than appear to connive at this glaring divorce between precept and practice, and is represented by Plato as going to his death with the words on his lips: "And now it is high time we separate; I go to die, you to live: but which of us is going the better way God only knows."[1] Xenophanes of Colophon, also, after stigmatising the theology of polytheism as exhibiting a moral depravity on the part of the so-called gods, of which the beasts would be ashamed, proceeded to elevate the τὸ ἄπειρον—or the "Physical Infinite"—into a monotheistic concept to serve as God; for he says, "There is one God, most high over men and gods; all of Him hears, sees, thinks. He has no parts; He is not manlike either in body or mind."[2]

In the "Revival of Letters" the same standpoint towards religion was assumed by the literary class as distinct from the great mass of the people, although the central principle of the thought and life of the Western World had changed in the fifteenth century A.D. from what it was in the fifth century B.C. Polytheism, with its purblind guesses at truth, had given place to Christianity, with its formulation of the grandest system of morality the world has seen. Yet, owing to the part the Roman Church had played in the days of the two Gregories, VII. and IX., and of Boniface VIII., in laying stress on what may be styled

[1] Close of the *Apologia*, which Schleiermacher, Grote, and Thirlwall regard as, in the main, the defence actually delivered by Socrates.

[2] Fragments of Xenophanes' poem on "Nature."

the mere "accidents" of ethical truth, and overlooking its essentials, the Renaissance leaders had preferred the pagan morality, with its simple and direct issues, to the Christian system of morals, inextricably interwoven as it appeared to be with the casuistical dogmas and doctrines of that ecclesiastical society which, to many Humanists, seemed tottering to its fall. The Renaissance therefore, as an inspiring influence, was distinctly non-Christian; while in some cases, as, for example, in those of Carlo Marsuppini, Filelfo, and Laurentius Valla,[1] it was even anti-Christian. Although Lorenzo had from early infancy been brought under the influence of a profoundly spiritual training by his mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, the form of faith and practice adopted even by her, and by her communicated to him, was more distinctively Neo-Platonic than Christian, inasmuch as she had, metaphorically speaking, sat at the feet of Ficino when he was unfolding his ideas on Plato to her father-in-law Cosimo.

Lorenzo de' Medici accordingly united in his own nature both the "semi-Christian," or Neo-Platonic, and the pagan elements present in the Renaissance. There is, however, no evidence extant that he ever assumed a directly antagonistic attitude to Christianity. Many critics have asked with a scarcely veiled sneer, how the same man could write his nobly spiritual *Laude*, or hymns in the vernacular, or his sacred play of *S. Giovanni e Paolo*, and those grossly sensual and immoral *Ballate* and carnival songs, which, with all their exquisite beauty of form and rhythm, raise a feeling of disgust in any pure mind. Yet, as Symonds aptly puts it, the men of the Renaissance were so con-

[1] Who proved the "Donation" of Constantine a forgery.

stituted that to turn from vice and cruelty and crime, from the deliberate corruption and enslavement of a people by licentious pleasures and the persecution of an enemy in secret, with a fervid and impassioned movement of the soul to God, was nowise impossible, and Lorenzo de' Medici was an example in point.

The fact that Lorenzo continued to prefer—notwithstanding all ecclesiastical persuasions to the contrary—the morality of Plato to that hybrid form of Scholastico-Aristotelian ethics taught by the Franciscan and Dominican moralists of the Church, Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas, showed beyond question that his sympathies were rather with the classic than the Christian type of virtue. His early training and his intercourse in after years with Ficino, led him to repudiate more and more the Catholic ethics, and to substitute for them a system, based at least on that of the great Greek Idealist, but which differed from Ficino's lofty interpretation thereof, in inclining more to what was sensuously beautiful than to what was either intellectually great or morally grand.

True, when dying, he summoned the clergy, who were in the habit of condemning Plato as the arch-enemy of the Church. But that was when he was physically and mentally enfeebled, and when the subtle superstitious trait in his nature temporarily overpowered his better judgment, by suggesting all kinds of spiritual dangers as likely to confront him in the Hereafter, should he die without the rites of the Church.[1]

[1] Fabronius, *Vita Laur.*, vol. i. p. 215; also cf. MS. diary of an anonymous Florentine author preserved in the Magliabechi Library.

Lorenzo's character must be viewed under three distinct aspects—as a statesman, as a scholar, and as a man—if we are to obtain any reliable key to the nature of this marvellously many-sided individual. His eclecticism showed itself in all he did. As a statesman he belonged to no distinctive school of politics. A thoroughgoing Opportunist, he shaped his policy by the events of the moment. In scholarship he attached himself to none of the cliques and coteries of the age. With all Humanists he was on terms of friendship, but he championed none of them in their wars of words. Not even his bosom friend Poliziano when he was defending Florentine scholarship against the insinuations of Merula of Milan, or disputing over Greek epigrams with Marullus, his successful rival in the affections of the lovely and learned Alessandra della Scala, could reckon on him as an ally. In a word, all departments of letters were laid under levy to contribute to the "tale" of his polymathic accomplishments, but he devoted himself exclusively to none.

Lorenzo cannot be regarded as possessing "genius" in the highest sense of the term. Into a loose use of the word we have unfortunately fallen at the present day, and we speak of the "genius" of men who have not a spark of the divine afflatus in them. Properly speaking, genius should only be applied to those who in their nature blend extreme susceptibility to all forms of beauty, with a surpassing imaginative insight into that subtler sense under which the World and material things, Man and his motives, the Unseen Universe and our relations to it, present themselves to the soul capable of understanding them! What Wordsworth says about nature's sublime spiritual teaching to

the "Seeing Soul" exactly expresses the distinction here. To nine hundred and ninety-nine men—

> "A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose *is* to *them*,
> And it *is* nothing more."[1]

To the thousandth it is a verse from the great Book of Nature, giving new views of life and its meaning, affording a key to Eternity and its ever-impending mystery, and which in a word—

> "Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Lorenzo certainly had this gift, but not in supreme measure. The philosophic distinction between *faculty* and *capacity* would serve to throw light upon the radical distinction between him and Poliziano. The latter was a man of soaring genius who, had he lived during any other epoch than that of the Renaissance, would not have been tempted to stray into the paths of dry critical scholarship and to fritter away his superb powers on such tasks as *Scholia in Platonem*, or *Herodiani de Romanorum Imperatorum vita ac rebus gestis Libri VIII., Angelo Politiano interpreti.*[2] If we can picture the late Lord Tennyson sitting down to annotate and comment upon the text of the writers of the classic era, while all the time the soul of such great imaginings as *Maud*, *In Memoriam*, or *The Idylls of the King*, fretted itself unavailingly against the cage bars of an uncongenial epoch, we shall then be able to realise somewhat

[1] *Peter Bell*, part i. v. 12, slightly altered.

[2] Cf. Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. p. 149, sec. 60, note; Pater, *Renaissance*, pp. 58–69.

of what the world has lost by the diverted intellectual development of Poliziano. What he accomplished in Latin verse—verse only inferior to the best of Virgil and of Horace; what he has accomplished in Italian —*La Giostra*, *La Favola di Orfeo*, the *Ballate*, the *Canzone*, the *Rispetti*, and others—only show us how much more he might have done. Symonds does not exaggerate his genius when he says of him—

"He was the greatest student and the greatest poet in Greek and Latin that Italy has produced. . . . In the history of the vulgar literature he fills a place midway between Petrarch and Ariosto; and had the moral fibre of Poliziano, his intellectual tension and spiritual aim, been at all commensurate with his twofold ability, the Italians might have shown in him a fourth singer equal in magnitude to their greatest." [1]

Lorenzo was infinitely more versatile than Poliziano, but he lacked his depth of insight into the soul of things. On the other hand, Poliziano, in the exuberance of his genius, frequently ran into extravagances of thought and diction which Lorenzo with his calm common sense would have avoided. While the point may be debated, whether Lorenzo's influence as a whole was beneficial on the development of Poliziano's genius, one thing may be granted, namely, that his example in the cultivation of a severe chasteness of style was exceedingly salutary to Poliziano. Nor was the latter slow to acknowledge it.

The debt of gratitude which the Renaissance owed to Lorenzo, particularly during the last decade of his life, may be briefly summarised under the following heads:—

[1] *Renaissance*, vol. iv. p. 348.

1. Having arrived at the conviction that if the "New Learning" was to realise the full extent of its mission the fruits of culture must be more diffused among all classes in the community, and especially among the young, he threw himself with his wonted energy into the work of founding public seminaries for the study of the ancient languages in places where none such had existed before. In towns of Tuscany where schools had been already established, he reorganised the course of study so as to bring it into harmony with the trend of Renaissance ideas. The institution of the Academy of Pisa was a case in point. He personally took a deep interest in the matter, liberally endowed the chairs, and was instrumental in securing scholars of outstanding merit to occupy them.[1] Such men as Bartolommeo Mariano Soccini, Baldo Bartolini, Lancelotto Tristano, and his brother Filippo, Pier Filippo Corneo, Felice Sandeo, and Franceso Accolti, in civil and canon law; in *belles lettres*, Lorenzo Lippi and Bartolommeo da Prato; in divinity, Domenico di Flandria and Bernardino Cherichini; in philosophy, Nicolo Tignosi, and the great Tomaso Ruciani in medicine, Albertino de' Chizzoli, Alessandro Sermoneta, Giovanni d'Aquila, and Pier Leoni—all scholars of high eminence—were chosen by him and his co-trustees.

This was only one instance out of many in which Lorenzo, finding that the old *studii pubblicci*[2] had failed to achieve the purpose for which they were founded, reorganised them, and either transplanted

[1] Fabronius, in *Vita Laur.*, p. 50. The Pisan Academy had been a very ancient foundation, but had fallen into disrepute and had been closed for many years previous to its reopening by Lorenzo.

[2] High-schools; see *ante*, p. 45.

them to some more suitable locality or left them in their ancient position but under an altered régime. Some of these schools are in existence to-day. That their influence was great is proved by the prevalence of culture in Italy until it was crushed out by the invading Spaniards in 1527. The remark made by Vida[1] is no more than the truth—"the youth midway in his teens now knows more than did the sage of a century ago." The fact is, sufficient stress has not been laid on this idea of Lorenzo's, that in the diffusion of culture we must begin with the young, whose minds are at the receptive stage when learning is easy. Lorenzo's "seminaries," which included in their scope the idea both of a high-school and of a university, and in connection with which one system of training would prevail from infancy to early manhood, contain much which Pestalozzi was afterwards to unfold in the early years of the nineteenth century as his own.[2] In the working out of his plans, however, Lorenzo had the advantage of the assistance of both Ficino and Landino, two of the greatest educationists of his epoch.

2. Further, the Renaissance owed a deep debt of gratitude to Lorenzo, inasmuch as he raised the standard of scholarship by advocating "specialism" in study. One of the first convictions borne home to him on reaching manhood, was that the days of the "polymath," or of the scholar who professed to have

[1] *Poemata Selecta.*

[2] Pestalozzi's book, *How Gertrude Educates her Children*, contains many ideas which were originally mooted by Lorenzo de' Medici. Pestalozzi failed in reducing his ideas to practice, as his schools at Berthoud and Yverdon proved; while Lorenzo carried his conception of what teaching should be into actual experience in numerous instances.

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mastered the entire circle of learning, were over. Filelfo's crudities were laughed at by men who, if they had not his encyclopædic knowledge of the classics, were more accurate as regards that knowledge and more discriminating in their style. Lorenzo was an advocate of absolute accuracy in scholarship, and that of course could only be obtained by limiting the area of the literary field which the scholar sought to make his own. Here again he was strengthened by the support of the later Humanists of the Medicean circle, Hermolao Barbaro, Bartolommeo Scala, Michael Marullus, and others. That craze for "purism" was even then beginning, which was to culminate in the "Ciceronianism" absurdities of Bembo and Sadoleto. So far Lorenzo encouraged it, and practised the principles he enunciated, but he had no sympathy with the ultra-fastidiousness of Bembo, who wrote to his friend Sadoleto begging him to hurry over his work on St. Paul's Epistles and turn to Hortensius; for, says he: "The barbaric style of Paul will ruin your taste. Stop this child's play, which is unworthy of an earnest man."[1]

3. Further, to Lorenzo, the Renaissance owed a deep debt of gratitude in consequence of the rapidity wherewith he realised how great a boon the invention of printing was about to confer on the "New Learning." Even before the death of his father Piero, Lorenzo was cognisant of the fact that the new art would revolutionise the progress of literature throughout Europe, and he, along with his mother Lucrezia, induced his father to invite Cennini to begin his task, first of printing, then of casting steel types. Piero died before Cennini had gone any distance towards realising his

[1] *The Age of the Renaissance*, by Paul Van Dyke, p. 324.

purpose, so that to Lorenzo, and to him alone, belongs the credit of encouraging Florentine printing.[1] But Lorenzo's chief benefit consisted in the consistent munificence wherewith he fostered the infant art. In his famous letter to his friend Federigo of Naples in 1466, regarding the use of the Tuscan vernacular as a noble literary medium, he hints at the revolution printing was to achieve; and in 1474, in another of his letters, he makes the following extraordinary prophecy: "I do not think I am far out when I say that a century hence the peasant will be able to purchase the volumes which now are within the resources only of the prince. As the waters cover the sea, so I believe literature will cover Europe from end to end." Has his prediction not been fulfilled?

4. Lorenzo (taking the idea from his grandfather Cosimo), almost alone amongst his countrymen of that epoch, realised that the Renaissance was not to be merely an Italian movement, but was to influence Europe and the world as saliently, if not more so, than it had influenced Italy. Hence his anxiety to conciliate scholars of all nationalities. His kindness to Reuchlin, to Grocyn, Fleming, Linacre, and others has already been noted.[2] To what has been said this alone need be added, that Lorenzo's courtesy to strangers bore fruit in unexpected ways. Who would have thought that his goodness to the three Englishmen in question would have been returned to him through another channel? When he wrote Henry VII. with regard to the wool trade, Grocyn and Linacre were able to render substantial assistance to Lorenzo's

[1] See *ante*, p. 130.

[2] Not Colet, as has sometimes been said. Colet did not go to Italy till 1493, the year after Lorenzo's death.

cause by relating the kindness they had received fro
the Magnifico. Further, Lorenzo was always ready t
aid in the establishment of any libraries, by furnish
ing copies of the MSS. and books in his own collectio
In fact, he seemed to consider himself only the cus
todian of his treasures; "Why should we keep them t
ourselves, and not let Europe share the benefits o
the new culture?" was his remark. During the las
year or two of his life, his correspondence, large before
became almost doubled, owing to the communication
he continued to maintain with scholars in other part
of Europe. With Joannes Andronicus Callistus, wh
resided during his latter years in France, he corre
sponded over Greek inscriptions on coins and jewels
to Janus Lascaris, his literary agent, he was constantl
writing asking him to call upon various scholars i
the places where for the time he chanced to be, t
obtain their opinion on certain matters. His letter
as still preserved in Florence, also in the Universit
of Paris and the Imperial Library at Berlin, are in
tensely interesting, throwing as they do a curiou
light upon the enthusiasm wherewith he fostere
Renaissance studies.[1] Even when his mind must hav
been distracted by plots at home and complication
abroad, he was ever ready to listen to and discus
any proposal whereby the results of Renaissanc
culture might be popularised. To him learning pre
sented itself under the aspect of a universal gift t
humanity, not as the prerogative or perquisite o
any special nation or class of persons.

5. Another point in connection with which the Renais
sance owed a deep debt of gratitude to Lorenzo was thi

[1] Herder, *Ideen sur Geschichte de Menschheit*; also his *Humanitätsbrief*

that he was the first among all the great patrons of the new movement to urge on scholars the necessity for mutual concentration of effort in place of individual jealousy and rivalry. In pointing out how much might be achieved by "specialism" in scholarship, he also indicated the necessity for a still more complete division of labour, by companies of Humanists working in harmony on separate parts of the same subject, and communicating their results to each other. For this end he sought to promote the extension of "Academies," and great was his joy to witness the harmony in aim and diversity of gifts and inclinations which characterised Ficino, Landino, Poliziano, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. To us of the twentieth century his ideas seem almost matter of course. But when mooted in the fifteenth, they were hailed with delight as the opinions of one of the sagest administrators of the age.[1] The conception of our modern universities owes much to Lorenzo.[2] The Scaligers, Budaeus, Casaubon, and others adopted his plans, and developed them along lines entirely undreamt of by Lorenzo. The Renaissance therefore might have died down into a scholar's enthusiasm for the monuments of antiquity, had Lorenzo not read into the meaning of the word, an interest in "literature" of all types, vernacular as well as classical.

6. Nor should we forget that to Lorenzo was largely due the attention paid to science in the "Revival of Learning" which took place in the fourteenth century. He had been associated in youth with Leo Battista Alberti, who certainly must take rank as one of the

[1] Cf. Fabronius and Verinus, *De Illustr. Urbis Fior.*; also Ammirato.
[2] *Ficini Epistolœ*; and George Buchanan's comments thereupon.

most marvellously gifted "geniuses" the world has seen. Whether we regard him from the point of view of art, of science, or of literature, he occupies in each department the position of pioneer and precursor.[1] He must be allowed to rank amongst the early Italian scientists. Not only by reason of his works on "Architecture" is this position claimed for him, but because he devoted himself to the pursuit of science on the scientific principles of observation and experiment. Let me again quote what Symonds says of him, a passage already cited—

"It is believed he anticipated some modern discoveries in optics and he certainly advanced the science of perspective. Like his compeer Lionardo, he devoted attention to mechanics, and devised machinery for raising sunken ships. Like Lionardo, again, he was never tired of interrogating nature, conducting curious experiments, and watching her more secret operations." [2]

This was the man to whom Lorenzo in youth was drawn by that magnetic attraction which Alberti exercised over all with whom he came in contact. From him the Magnifico imbibed that love of science which distinguished him all through life. Under his direction he erected that laboratory for the prosecution in those experiments which proved such a delight to him. Although his chemistry savoured too much of alchemy and thaumaturgy,—for the quest after the *alkahest* or universal solvent whereby the baser metals would be transmuted into gold, and the *grand elixir* which would confer immortal youth upon him

[1] Symonds, *Renaissance*, vol. iv. p. 159.
[2] *Renaissance*, vol. ii. p. 248 ; see *ante*, p. 105.

who quaffed it, had by no means been laughed out of fashion,—still, he did much good by fostering the love of the practical questioning of nature and her elements, from which the verified principles of true science have been evolved. For the Arabian investigators of the Middle Ages Lorenzo entertained a high respect. The speculations of Giaber, the discoverer of "Strong Acids," Avicenna, Averroes, were studied by him with intense application, and his patronage was warmly extended to any youths who showed an aptitude for scientific research.

7. Lorenzo carried out the true spirit of the "Revival of Letters" by regarding the term "Renaissance" as applicable to modern Italian as well as to ancient classic "literature." From this position, of course, the inevitable corollary was, that the vernacular literature of every land ought to be cultivated by its inhabitants. Lorenzo therefore, in that great conflict between the advocates of "Ancient" as opposed to "Modern" Learning, which Swift has portrayed with such sustained irony in his prose satire *The Battle of the Books*, had always ranged himself on the side of the "Moderns." Attached though he was to classic studies, he persistently maintained that although the best mental training was to be obtained from the study of the classics, the supreme and perfect voice of a nation's life could find expression only in a vernacular literature. His defence of Italian letters in his famous letter to Federigo of Naples, albeit penned in youth, shows a soundness of judgment and a closeness of reasoning scarcely to be expected in one so young. Not only did he preach but he practised, and his "poems in

the vulgar tongue," as he called them, rank him in the judgment of all competent critics very high indeed among Italian poets of the second degree. Had he written nothing save his pastoral or rustic pieces, smacking as they do so unmistakably of "Flora and the country green," he would have laid his native land under a deep debt of gratitude. But there is not a department of vernacular verse which he has not cultivated with conspicuous success, and though he had not the soaring genius of Poliziano, the point would be a nice one for critical decision whether Italian literature does not owe more to the "Magnifico" than to the great Humanist.

SECTION 5.—*Lorenzo's Patronage of Art and Letters*

POPES—Paul II., 1464; Sixtus IV., 1471; Innocent VIII., 1484

Lorenzo de' Medici's patronage of Renaissance art was as discriminating as it was devoted. The Laurentian epoch, though one can scarcely separate it from that of Cosimo as regards style, most assuredly can be differentiated by a greater simplicity and chasteness in the quality of the work. The aim of Lorenzo in art as in literature was to foster naturalness in conception united to Hellenic simplicity in execution. Upon all his protégés he impressed the principle, that the highest art was to conceal art, and that this result could only be achieved by holding the mirror up to nature. Hellenic purity of taste in design, as well as Hellenic chasteness and severe simplicity in execution, were the Renaissance principles inculcated by Lorenzo in art as well as in literature. His

beneficiaries, whose desire was to merit his approval, adopted these doctrines and exemplified them in all their work, so that to him is largely due that noble simplicity in painting, sculpture, and architecture characteristic of the Laurentian epoch.

To name all the painters, sculptors, architects, workers in wood and metals, etc. whom Lorenzo encouraged by his patronage and in many cases supported by his bounty would be impossible. As has been remarked already, no lad whose youth gave promise of a glorious prime ever applied to Lorenzo in vain. But for his encouragement Antonio Pollajuolo could never have pursued his studies into the anatomy of the human frame, which converted painting, from haphazard guesswork, into an intelligent application of scientific principles. Though Luca della Robbia was an old man by the time Lorenzo succeeded his father, yet was it not the youth who stimulated Piero to assist the great sculptor in his attempt to bring to perfection his invention of "coloured-glaze," which converted clay into a valuable substitute for marble.

Then as regards oil painting, how much was due to his patronage that the idea really took root among artists, has never really been gauged. Hitherto the work of the leading colourists in Tuscany had been executed in what was called "distemper," namely, with pigments rendered cohesive by the use of glutinous substances. Stimulated, however, by Lorenzo's encouragement, Andrea da Castagna began experimenting in "oils," and finally succeeded in revolutionising his craft. Aided by the Magnifico also, who placed his unrivalled collection of relics of antiquity at his service, the young Filippo Lippi devoted himself to the

study of the antique, in order that the backgrounds and minor details in his pictures might be accurate as well as spirited. Luca Signorelli, whose skill in portraying the beauty of the human form and the variations of expression on the human countenance, excited the wonder of his own age; Verrocchio, the apostle of Realism in sculpture and painting, who if he did not invent, at least rendered general the practice of taking casts from the faces of the dead; Lorenzo di Credi, who as a colourist preached and practised the doctrine that careful attention to minute gradation of hues and tints was the secret of success in brush work; Sandro Botticelli, who produced so many portraits of the family, all executed with that harmonious colouring, simplicity, and truth to nature which distinguished him, that Armstrong styles him the "Court painter of the Medici"; Piero de' Cosimo, who presents such a subtle union of the fantastic and the naturalistic, the humorous and the sad; Leo Battista Alberti, whose influence as architect, painter, and sculptor was scarcely less than as poet, scientist, and philosopher; Ghirlandaio, who while dealing almost solely with religious themes yet treats them in a curiously matter of fact style; Rosellino, Mino da Fiesole, and many other minor names, all owed much to Lorenzo in the way of encouragement, inspiration, and, above all, criticism. For Lorenzo, like his grandfather Cosimo, would only recognise the art of his friends in their best work. To be deemed worthy of a place in one of Lorenzo's villas was the ambition of all his protégés; but as they recognised that only the highest expression of their genius would meet with his approval and win the prize of his praise, his patronage was an important factor in

producing those masterpieces which constitute the glory of the Laurentian age.

To Lorenzo's perception of their outstanding genius, amid many other aspirants to his favour, both Lionardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo owed their first step on the ladder of fame. Both were admitted to his house and to his table, while the former was sent by him to Milan, where he speedily rose to eminence. Michael Angelo lived as his son in the Palazzo Medici until Lorenzo's death, when his protégé was but eighteen. Piero, the Magnifico's son and successor, certainly showed the lad great kindness, but ere long the patron was a fugitive who himself needed shelter.

Nor was architecture forgotten by Lorenzo. In Giuliano Giamberti, nicknamed "San Gallo," Lorenzo discovered a genius who, if he did not rival Brunelleschi and Ghiberti, showed a "modernness" in his ideas and a power of combining artistic grace with an attention to such practical details as commodiousness and convenience, which rendered him one of the most popular architects of the age. Benedetto da Maiano was another who benefited much by Lorenzo's encouragement.

To name here all the branches of art or industry which enjoyed the Magnifico's fostering care would be impossible. He encouraged gem engraving; majolica-work also received a share of his attention; he subsidised the rearing of silk worms, and brought skilled workmen from Bruges to initiate a Florentine tapestry factory. Even music was a passion with this many-sided patron of the arts. While some of his friends, such as Ficino, Baccio Ugolino, and Lionardo da Vinci were fine performers on the lyre and flute, he had a profound regard for the great organist of the

cathedral, Antonio Squarcialupi, then regarded as one of the best executants in the world. The Belgian composer, Josquin Despres of Hainault, who, as Mr. Armstrong says, was long in Rome under Sixtus IV., and visited Florence more than once during Lorenzo's lifetime, was another friend and correspondent; while Agricola and Obrecht, distinguished musicians and composers of their day, were frequently his guests. But the composer who had the most intimate relations with Lorenzo was Heinrich Isaak, the Bohemian.

"He is said to have been sent on a diplomatic mission by Maximilian, whose Court composer he afterwards became. For several years he was in Lorenzo's service and society, setting to music his drama of *San Giovanni* and *San Paolo*, the ballads and the part songs for the carnival, throwing himself into the gay secular life of the city. . . . Lorenzo found in him the musician through whom his own love for popular poetry could find expression." [1]

Such, then, was Lorenzo's interest in art, the interest of a man whose intellectual and artistic cravings were as manifold and as diverse as the complete circle of the arts and sciences. If we except such "marvels" of culture as Alberti, Lionardo, and Pico, was there one other son of that wondrous age who, inspired by the spirit of the Renaissance, attempted so many things and achieved success almost the highest in them all?

Although this section has already been unduly spun out, we cannot pass from the fascinating theme of Lorenzo's era, without briefly referring to the group of scholars which adorned his epoch. These were "men of letters" inspired by a love of learning as pure as it

[1] Armstrong, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. 440.

was profound. Gain or self-interest weighed as naught with such natures as Alberti or Ficino. The individual was lost in the cause, and, provided it progressed, what mattered it what the martyrs of letters had to suffer. We have already referred on more than one occasion to Leo Battista Alberti. The intellectual congener of Lionardo da Vinci in grasp of mind, he was fully his equal, in some respects his superior, in breadth of sympathy, soaring sublimity of conception, and exhaustless versatility of accomplishments, for it was through his association with Alberti that Lionardo was stimulated to develop his powers along similar lines. Born about 1405 in Venice, where his father, exiled by the Albizzi, had sought refuge, the young scholar did not find his way back to Florence until the rule of the *ottimati* was finally overthrown by Cosimo in 1434. From early boyhood until age he was an intense student. Gifted with a memory whose grip upon facts when once acquired was like that of the octopus upon its prey, by the time he was twenty he was already regarded as one of the most learned men of his epoch. To the study of the classics and of antiquity generally, he had devoted himself with such enthusiasm that at the age stated he composed the comedy of *Philodoxius*, which was so admirable an imitation of the antique that it passed for the work of a new writer of the Terentian age, Lepidus Comicus, and as such was actually published by the Aldi. The entire round of the arts and sciences was mastered by him. His insight into every branch of knowledge seemed intuitive, and his command of the arts was innate, says Symonds, to which we may add that his modesty and utter lack of self-consciousness were as charming as his supreme gifts were impressive.

Though one of the leading classical scholars of his time, and a man imbued with the most varied culture of the Renaissance, Leo Battista Alberti preferred to devote himself to the task of restoring the vernacular literature to honour. He it was who stimulated Lorenzo to expend his poetical powers in compositions in the vulgar tongue, and one epigrammatic sentence the Magnifico never forgot, revealing as it does Alberti's wonderful prescience: "The Present may blame you for casting away what it thinks your only prescriptive claim to remembrance, but posterity will bless you: for, mark my words, in a couple of hundred years modern Latin poetry will be forgotten, but a living tongue like the Italian will last for ever." His vernacular writings are of great value, his *Treatise of the Family*,[1] his *Deiciarchia*, his *Teogenio*, his manuals on art, his satiric essays and *Novelle*, and last but not least his poems, all betray genius of high order. Alberti has never received the recognition due to his supreme ability. He has been overshadowed, not by greater but by more fortunate men, and, finally, he has been obscured by the picturesque figure of the great Magnifico himself. Alberti died in 1472.

Ficino has already been touched upon in connection with the age of Cosimo, by whom he was "brought out"; accordingly, the name coming next in order is that of Cristoforo Landino, the great exponent of Aristotelianism. Born at Florence in 1424, he spent his youth in teaching and study until he was appointed in 1457 to the chair of Eloquence and Poetry in his native city, where he continued to lecture upon Latin literature until his death in 1504. The benefits he

[1] A part of this was long attributed to Agnolo Pandolfini.

rendered to the Renaissance were incalculable. Besides annotating Horace and Virgil and translating Pliny's *Natural Histories*, he performed the most important of all services to the "New Learning" by writing his *Camaldolese Discussions*, which will ever remain the noblest tribute ever paid to Florentine Humanism. To anyone reading it to-day, the volume presents itself as one of the most vivid and charming pictures extant of the scholar's life and labours in the Valdarno of the fifteenth century. Landino's character was as lofty as his writings were learned, and he left the impress of both graven deep on the body of his time. As a critic he was almost unrivalled, while his services to his age in preparing his great *Commentary on Dante* materially contributed to the revival of vernacular literature and of interest in the author of the *Divina Commedia*.

Who can satisfactorily describe and classify the two scholars who come next? Their natures were of that elusively Protean type whereof Alberti was an eminent example. But neither Angelo Poliziano nor Giovanni Pico della Mirandola indulged in that wayward vagabondage, both as regards life and ideas, which nullified to some extent the benefit that would otherwise have accrued from the work of the author of the *Teogonio*. Poliziano, as we have already more than once remarked, possessed genius of a very high order, which was fettered, as regards its fullest development, by unfortunate conditions both of station and epoch. He also tied his faculties too much to the wheels of the Medicean chariot, and, of course, whithersoever it led, he had to follow. Poliziano's genius was of a cast sufficiently masculine to have influenced his epoch in his own way. He allowed Lorenzo to prescribe the

manner in which he should influence it. Born in 1454, Poliziano was therefore five years the junior of his patron, and he survived him only two years, dying not exactly of a broken heart, but of sheer longing for the return of a régime wherein he had been socially happy, but wherein, as far as the development of his genius was concerned, it would have been better had he never lived. Poliziano must assuredly be granted, in the Italian hierarchy of song, a place amongst the immortals, inasmuch as he did for the literature of his country what Tennyson four hundred years after achieved for the literature of England—wedded beauty of sound to aptness of sense. Coming from his native Montepulciano,—whence he takes his name,—at the age of ten he migrated to Florence to study the *belles lettres* under Landino, Argyropoulos, Andronicos Kallistos, and Ficino. From the first, the most marvellous precocity displayed itself, allied to a love of study and a perseverance almost as marvellous. No fact ever graven on the retentive palimpsest of his mind seems afterwards to have been lost or even obscured amid later accretions of knowledge. His Latin epigrams at fifteen and his Greek at seventeen were the wonder of the scholars of his age, and the highest expectations were formed of his future eminence.[1] The tradition that he was so poor that he had to write to Lorenzo for clothing, and that his verses of gratitude written in Latin, Greek, and Italian first attracted the Magnifico's attention to him, must be pronounced apocryphal, before the evidence of fact that two years before the date alleged for the incident Lorenzo had his eye on him, and expressed his pleasure at his abilities. Poliziano must be

[1] Tiraboschi, vol. vi. p. 234.

admitted to be the greatest "all-round genius" modern Italy has produced. He had not Dante's soaring soul, but in some respects he was a greater master of form even than Petrarch, and his power of picturesque scene-painting excelled even the word-pictures of Boccaccio. As a Humanist he stands easily first, even Erasmus having to take second place in comparison. George Buchanan was the only scholar who rivalled him as a Latinist, and he belongs to a different epoch. Poliziano absorbed the classics until they became part and parcel of his intellectual being, Buchanan and he being the only two scholars of whom the fact is recorded that they thought in Latin. His culture was nearly as varied as his patron's, and his acquirements, if not so encyclopædic as his, went infinitely deeper.

"He was a pioneer in modern methods of scholarship, in criticism, in interpretation, in emendation. He ascribed the highest importance to exhaustive collation of MSS., and took all pains to found his text upon the best. Thus his edition of the *Pandects* was for very long unrivalled. He applied, moreover, to scholarship a systematic study of numismatics and epigraphy, and, not content with the Medicean collections, travelled to Rome, Venice, and Verona in search of fresh material. At the age of twenty-six Politian obtained the Chair of Latin and Greek Eloquence. Rarely has a professor been so prolific and so stimulating. Replete with learning, his lectures were no dry comment on the text; his aim was to give his pupils a passion for their subject. In each of his introductions he illustrated the whole branch of literature of which this author was a type. Suetonius was taken as a text for a lecture on historical method, Persius for another on the origin and elements of satire."[1]

[1] Armstrong, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. 357.

His Italian poems are finished gems as to form, albeit a little superficial in thought. But in judging of the *Orfeo*, *Giostra*, *Stanze*, also of his *Canzone*, *ballate*, and *rispetti*, the fact must be borne in mind that during the Medicean epoch *form* was esteemed everything. Taken as a whole, the genius of Poliziano is one of the glories of the Italian Renaissance, because, in producing him, it moulded the mind of one of the greatest of Italian writers.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola was another of those strangely constituted men whose type is only to be met with during the Renaissance. Born about 1464, he arrived in Florence in 1484, a youth as marvellously beautiful in person as he was richly gifted as to "genius" and accomplishments. To him, as to Poliziano, the term *genius* may be applied without risk of misnomer. From earliest boyhood he had plunged into the study of languages, ancient and modern, and of philosophy. When, therefore, he appeared in Florence, he created a *furore* of interest such as had never been known before. He occupied one of the *palazzos*, kept a large retinue of servants and a splendid style of living, yet personally his habits were almost those of an anchorite. For a time he indulged in the pleasures of the gay city, spending what time he could with the scholars and Humanists then residing in Valdarno. Whether he found his purse was unable to stand the drain upon it, or he really suffered from remorse of conscience over wasted days, certain it is he abruptly withdrew himself from that society whereof he was the idol, and became well-nigh a recluse. Although introduced to the Platonic philosophy prior to his arrival in Florence, he did not realise its potent possibilities, or its mysterious magnetism, until he came under the influ-

ence of Ficino in the Academy. The great system of Grecian Idealism simply took possession of his whole nature. Naught else was accounted of moment that had not some connection, direct or derived, with the speculations of the Sage of Academe. To find common ground of harmony between Platonism and the Christian theology was the task to which he addressed himself. Not the mere reconciliation of the diverse systems was his aim, but to reduce them both to their original elements, and to discover in those elements the traces of the unity of all human knowledge—that was his quest.

"He sought to seize the soul of truth that animates all systems. Not the classics nor the Scriptures alone, but the writings of the Schoolmen, the glosses of Arabic philosophers, and the more obscure products of Hebrew erudition had for him their solid value." [1]

He even plunged into the study of the Cabbala, in the hope of finding something there that would afford him that universal solvent which he sought for all diverse systems. But he only succeeded in imparting a permanent twist to his previously powerful and straightforward mind. The new aim, which henceforward was to engross all his attention until his death, was to prove Christianity an eclectic system, wherein harmonising principles taken from all the philosophies found a place, but where the basis of all was to be discovered in the esoteric teaching of the Jews.[2] The work achieved by Pico was largely thrown away, inasmuch as he did not advance far enough to touch

[1] Symonds, *Renaissance*, vol. ii. p. 241.
[2] Cf. Pico's *Apologia*.

the fringe of modern philosophy. Notwithstanding this, his labours during the Renaissance epoch bore a measure of fruit, in stimulating the ambition of others and in leading scholars to realise the importance of the great doctrine which inculcates the necessity for unifying and classifying human knowledge. The influence of his pure, noble, learning-devoted life lingered long after him. "If any example would make a man a scholar, it would be that of Pico della Mirandola," said Tasso, nearly a century later.

To the others who ranked among Lorenzo's intimates only passing mention can be accorded. Bartolommeo Scala, who died Chancellor of Florence, furnished an instance of the democratic character of the civic hierarchy. Based alone on merit, birth was rather a bar than a benefit in facilitating promotion. Scala was the miller's son at Colle, was born about 1430, attracted the notice of Cosimo, who received him into his household, and advanced his fortunes until he became Chancellor in 1472, on the death of Benedetto Accolti. He was a capable scholar, his apologues being highly commended by Landino and Ficino. He wrote poems in both Latin and Italian, which are still extant; and a *History of Florence*, whereof he only completed four books. He had the misfortune, for his own reputation, to provoke the wrath of Poliziano, first because Scala unwisely taunted him with being a dependant on the Medici, and second, because the beautiful Alessandra della Scala, after exchanging amatory Greek epigrams with the great Humanist, chose to marry Michael Marullus rather than her correspondent.[1]

[1] Poliziano, *Epigrams*, lib. xi.

Ermolao Barbaro was another of Lorenzo's "jackals," and scoured Europe in the search after MSS., inscriptions, engraved gems, and relics of antiquities of all kinds. In addition, he was a prolific author. His treatise, *De Cœlibatu*, written when only eighteen, and his *Castigationes Plinianæ*, entitle him to rank with the most successful restorers of the ancient learning. His life was as exemplary as his learning was extensive. Though living mostly at Venice, he spent much time in Florence.

Luigi Pulci, too, must be named as another of Lorenzo's intimates. In addition to his interest in the revival of classic letters, he was a poet of a high order, his *Morgante Maggiore* still taking rank as one of the great epics in Italian literature. In common with Matteo Franco, he engaged in one of those satiric contests so popular at this epoch, wherein the combatants said the harshest and bitterest things of each other without apparently affecting the terms of mutual friendship whereon they stood. We have an instance of the same in Scots literature in the *Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*.[1] Matteo Franco was a learned canon in Florence, whose zeal on behalf of the Renaissance was such that he copied with his own hand many of the Latin and Greek texts, that he might impress their beauties on his memory. An excellent teacher, Landino used to say he always knew when a lad had been trained by Matteo Franco. To Italian literature he also devoted much attention, and delighted greatly in satiric compositions.

Besides these leading scholars, there was a crowd of

[1] Cf. my volume on "William Dunbar" in the "Famous Scots Series."

men of lesser note, whose labours on behalf of the Renaissance were not lost sight of by Lorenzo. The humblest Humanist whose work was inspired by love of antiquity was held in honour by the Magnifico. He was made welcome at his board, and taught to feel that scholarship was a surer passport to the friendship of the "uncrowned King of Florence" than birth the noblest or wealth the greatest. Lorenzo de' Medici completed the work Cosimo had commenced, and the literature as well as the scholarship of Europe, as they exist to-day, owe more to the enlightened policy and self-denying labours of these two men than to the efforts of any other patrons during that intellectual seedtime.

CHAPTER VI

The Age of Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, afterwards Pope Leo x., 1475–1521

Section 1.—*His Life prior to his Pontificate*

Popes—Sixtus iv., 1471; Innocent viii., 1484; Alexander vi., 1492; Pius iii., 1503; Julius ii., 1503

Lorenzo de' Medici left three sons on whom devolved the difficult task of proving themselves the worthy progeny of such a parent. In life, their father used to say that his eldest boy Piero would be distinguished for ability, his second Giovanni for probity, his third Giuliano for an amiable temper.[1] Singular how all these prognostications should have been falsified. Piero, at the crisis, when the making or the marring of his whole future depended on the attitude he would assume towards Charles viii., behaved as only a terrified schoolboy would have done, showing that, whatever else might be present in his character, true courage—his father's courage—was awanting. Poliziano, who had been his tutor, entertained the highest hopes of him, remarking that he possessed "the talents of his father, the virtues of his grandfather, and the prudence of the

[1] Cf. Valori in *Vita di Lorenzo*, p. 64.

venerable Cosimo." The correspondents, also, of the great Florentine Humanist[1] are perpetually referring to the abilities of the heir of the Magnifico, and auguring well for the future of Florence under his rule. Affection for the father possibly rendered them blind to the faults of mind and will, which, as he grew older, made themselves painfully evident in the son.

The third son, Giuliano, as Roscoe says, was more distinguished by his attention to the cause of literature, and by his mild and affable disposition, than by his talent for political affairs. For a time he was intrusted with the government of the city of Florence after the return of the family from banishment, but his health and his inclinations were alike unfitted for such a position. He therefore took up his residence in Rome, where he played the part of the literary Mæcenas during the pontificate of his brother. Having married Philiberta, sister of Charles, Duke of Savoy, and a descendant of the house of Bourbon, he was created Duke of Nemours by Francis I. He inherited no small share of his father's genius, and, had he lived, would have added still further lustre to the name. He died at the age of thirty-seven. In Bembo's great dialogue upon the Italian language, he is introduced as one of the interlocutors,[2] and he also has a place in Castiglione's still more celebrated work, *The Book of the Courtier*. On this point Roscoe adds that in the Laurentian Library several of his sonnets are still preserved, "and some specimens of his compositions are adduced by Crescimbeni, which, if they do not display any very extraordinary spirit of poetry, sufficiently

[1] Politian, *Epis.*, lib. xii. ep. 6.

[2] Cf. Bembo, *Opera*, tom. v. p. 197 (editio 1570).

prove that to a correct judgment he united an elegant taste." [1]

Of the three sons of Lorenzo the Magnificent, he who in largest measure inherited the varied abilities of the father was Giovanni, the one who occupies the middle place in point of age. He was destined from infancy for the Church, in deference to the pious wishes of his mother, Madonna Clarice. Brought forward into the public gaze when still little more than a babe, and with the necessity for keeping up his dignity continually impressed on him, he never seems to have been a child in the true sense of the word. His promotion was unprecedentedly rapid. At seven years of age he was admitted into holy orders, receiving the tonsure from Gentile, Bishop of Arezzo. This entitled him to accept ecclesiastical preferment, and gave him the right to call himself "Messer Giovanni." Before reaching eight he was appointed, by Louis XI. of France, Abbot of Fonte Dolce, which was followed almost immediately by a presentation to the Archbishopric of Aix in Provence. This, however, could not be carried into effect, as it was found that the occupant of the See was still living. Giovanni, therefore, had to rest content with the abbacy of the rich Tuscan monastery of Passignano, while Ludovico Moro assigned him that of Miramondo, and Ferrante of Naples the wealthy Monte Cassino.

From early boyhood Giovanni de' Medici was a hard student. That he could be otherwise was scarcely possible, seeing he enjoyed the benefit of Poliziano's training as tutor, while Ficino in the Platonic philosophy, and Landino in the Aristotelian, acted as his

[1] Roscoe's *Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. 357.

instructors. They all testify to his diligence and high moral tone. At first the future Pope seemed to have felt a kind of repulsion towards Poliziano, owing possibly to the influence of his mother, who conceived an intense dislike towards the distinguished Florentine scholar. After the death of Clarice, Giovanni came to understand the nobler side of his tutor's nature, and they became warmly attached to each other. This led to greater assiduity in classic studies, and in consequence to greater proficiency in the Latin and Greek languages. He also received instruction from Demetrius Chalcondyles and Petrus Egineta; and, after Poliziano was appointed to the Chair of Greek and Latin Eloquence, Bernardo Dovisi, better known as Bernardo da Bibiena, assumed the principal direction of the studies of his riper years.

This intense devotion to letters obtained their natural reward. Lorenzo had always lamented that his family had no representative in the College of Cardinals. All his efforts, therefore, were bent towards the realisation of this object—the elevation of Giovanni to the dignity of a cardinal. After considerable solicitation, personal and through the medium of his friends, Innocent VIII. listened to Lorenzo's request, and in 1489 appointed Giovanni, then a boy of thirteen, to a place in the Sacred College. That he should not assume the insignia of his rank, nor be received as a member of the Consistory for three years, were the conditions annexed to the honour; while the advice was given that he should spend the interval at Pisa in theological study.

Though the anxious father made several attempts to obtain some modification of the conditions as to the time of probation—for already the Magnifico felt the

approach of the Shadow feared of man—his efforts were in vain. Innocent had already been blamed too sharply for promising to raise a boy of thirteen to a dignity eagerly sought for by aged ecclesiastics, to dare to court new criticism. He had therefore to put Lorenzo off with smooth words, and Giovanni was not consecrated until the appointed time had elapsed. During the interim he proceeded to Pisa, and devoted himself to the study of theology. In this branch of letters his progress was as marked as in others, so much so that the fame of it reached His Holiness in Rome, and led him to remark to the proud father, in one of his letters, "I have heard of his exemplary conduct, and of the high distinction he has won in the academic debates. I consider him as my own son, and shall, when it is least expected, order his promotion to be made public."

The moment the three years of probation had expired, Giovanni, then a tall, handsome lad of sixteen, though his demeanour might well have suited sixty, was admitted to all the honours of his rank, the ceremony of investiture being performed on 9th March 1492, by Matteo Bosso, the learned prior of the monastery at Fiesole.[1] After spending a few days with his father, who was then very ill and fast nearing his end,[2] the boy-cardinal set out for Rome to pay his respects to the Pope. Although the dying man would fain have retained his favourite son near him during the short time remaining to him on earth, the circumstance was characteristic of Lorenzo's policy through life, namely, to subordinate private feelings

[1] Cf. the letter left by Bosso describing the ceremony, *Recuperationes Fesulanæ*, epis. cx.

[2] See *ante*, p. 168.

to the good of the family. Well did he realise he would look upon his son's face no more, yet he urged him to go, and even playfully chid him for his display of filial feeling over "an old gouty invalid."

Messer Giovanni departed from Florence in the middle of March 1492; on 8th April his father passed away, and the glory of the Florentine Medici was eclipsed for many a long year. But before the Magnifico breathed his last, he gathered up the scanty residuum of his strength to indite to the cardinal a letter which, for ripe wisdom, many writers have considered not unworthy to rank with the advice of Polonius to Laertes. For keen insight into the springs of human motive, for wide knowledge of character, earnest inculcation of lofty spiritual principles, diversified by the precepts of a practical common-sense morality, the letter stands unrivalled among Lorenzo's writings. Owing to the light it throws upon the life of Giovanni, as well as for the insight it gives into Renaissance ideas and sympathies, this epistle is of great value. It well merits quotation:—

Lorenzo de' Medici to Giovanni de' Medici, Cardinal.

"You, and all of us who are interested in your welfare, ought to esteem ourselves highly favoured by Providence, not only for the many honours and benefits bestowed on our house, but more particularly for having conferred upon us, in your person, the greatest dignity we have ever enjoyed. This favour, in itself so important, is rendered still more so by the circumstances with which it is accompanied, and especially by the consideration of your youth and of our situation in the world. The first thing that I would therefore suggest to you is, that you ought to be grateful to God, and

continually to recollect that it is not through your merits, your prudence, or your solicitude, that this event has taken place, but through His favour, which you can only repay by a pious, chaste, and exemplary life; and that your obligations to the performance of these duties are so much the greater, as in your early years you have given some reasonable expectation that your riper age may produce such fruits. It would indeed be highly disgraceful, and as contrary to your duty as to my hopes, if, at a time when others display a greater share of reason and adopt a better mode of life, you should forget the precepts of your youth, and forsake the path in which you have hitherto trodden. Endeavour therefore to alleviate the burthen of your early dignity by the regularity of your life, and by your perseverance in those studies which are suitable to your profession. It gave me great satisfaction to learn that, in the course of the past year, you had frequently, of your own accord, gone to communion and confession; nor do I conceive that there is any better way of obtaining the favour of heaven than by habituating yourself to a performance of these and similar duties. This appears to me to be the most suitable and useful advice which, in the first instance, I can possibly give you.

"I well know, that as you are now to reside at Rome, that sink of all iniquity, the difficulty of conducting yourself by these admonitions will be increased. The influence of example is itself prevalent; but you will probably meet with those who will particularly endeavour to corrupt and incite you to vice; because, as you may yourself perceive, your early attainment to so great a dignity is not observed without envy, and those who could not prevent you receiving that honour will secretly endeavour to diminish it, by inducing you to forfeit the good estimation of the public; thereby precipitating you into that gulf into which they had themselves fallen; in which attempt, the consideration of your youth will give them a confidence of success. To these difficulties you ought to

oppose yourself with the greater firmness, as there is at present less virtue amongst your brethren of the college. I acknowledge, indeed, that several of them are good and learned men, whose lives are exemplary, and whom I would recommend to you as patterns of your conduct. By emulating them you will be so much the more known and esteemed, in proportion as your age and the peculiarity of your situation will distinguish you from your colleagues. Avoid, however, as you would Scylla or Charybdis, the imputation of hypocrisy; guard against all ostentation, either in your conduct or your discourse; affect not austerity, nor even appear too serious. This advice you will, I hope, in time understand and practise better than I can express it.

"Yet you are not unacquainted with the great importance of the character which you have to sustain, for you well know that all the Christian world would prosper if the cardinals were what they ought to be; because in such a case there would always be a good Pope, upon which the tranquillity of Christendom so materially depends. Endeavour, then, to render yourself such, that, if all the rest resembled you, we might expect this universal blessing. To give you particular directions as to your behaviour and conversation would be a matter of no small difficulty, I shall therefore only recommend that, in your intercourse with the cardinals and other men of rank, your language be unassuming and respectful, guiding yourself, however, by your own reason, and not submitting to be impelled by the passions of others, who, actuated by improper motives, may pervert the use of their reason. Let it satisfy your conscience that your conversation is without intentional offence; and if, through impetuosity of temper, anyone should be offended, as his enmity is without just cause, so it will not be very lasting. On this your first visit to Rome, it will however be more advisable for you to listen to others than to speak much yourself.

"You are now devoted to God and the Church; on which

account you ought to aim at being a good ecclesiastic, and to show that you prefer the honour and state of the Church and of the Apostolic See to every other consideration. Nor, while you keep this in view, will it be difficult for you to favour your family and your native place. On the contrary, you should be the link to bind this city closer to the Church, and our family with the city; and although it be impossible to foresee what accidents may happen, yet I doubt not but this may be done with equal advantage to all; observing, however, that you are always to prefer the interests of the Church.

"You are not only the youngest cardinal in the college, but the youngest person that ever was raised to that rank; and you ought therefore to be the most vigilant and unassuming, not giving others occasion to wait for you, either in the chapel, the consistory, or upon deputations. You will soon get a sufficient insight into the manners of your brethren. With those of less respectable character converse not with too much intimacy; not merely on account of the circumstance in itself, but for the sake of public opinion. Converse on general topics with all. On public occasions let your equipage and dress be rather below than above mediocrity. A handsome house and a well-ordered family will be preferable to a great retinue and a splendid residence. Endeavour to live with regularity, and gradually to bring your expenses within those bounds which in a new establishment cannot perhaps be expected. Silk and jewels are not suitable for persons in your station. Your taste will be better shown in the acquisition of a few elegant remains of antiquity, or in the collecting of handsome books, and by your attendants being learned and well-bred rather than numerous. Invite others to your house oftener than you receive invitations. Practise neither too frequently. Let your own food be plain, and take sufficient exercise, for those who wear your habit are soon liable, without great caution, to contract infirmities. The station of a cardinal is not less secure than elevated; on which account

those who arrive at it too frequently become negligent, conceiving that their object is attained, and that they can preserve it with little trouble. This idea is often injurious to the life and character of those who entertain it. Be attentive therefore to your conduct, and confide in others too little rather than too much. There is one rule which I would recommend to your attention in preference to all others: Rise early in the morning. This will not only contribute to your health, but will enable you to arrange and expedite the business of the day; and as there are various duties incident to your station, such as the performance of divine service, studying, giving audience, etc., you will find the observance of this admonition productive of the greatest utility. Another very necessary precaution, particularly on your entrance into public life, is to deliberate every evening on what you may have to perform the following day, that you may not be unprepared for whatever may happen. With respect to your speaking in the Consistory, it will be most becoming for you at present to refer the matters in debate to the judgment of His Holiness, alleging as a reason your own youth and inexperience. You will probably be desired to intercede for the favours of the Pope on particular occasions. Be cautious, however, that you trouble him not too often; for his temper leads him to be most liberal to those who weary him least with their solicitations. This you must observe, lest you should give him offence, remembering also at times to converse with him on more agreeable topics; and if you should be obliged to request some kindness from him, let it be done with that modesty and humility which are so pleasing to his disposition. Farewell."

Giovanni seems to have realised at once the responsibilities resting on him, not so much as a Prince of the Church, but as the son of the great Magnifico. In a letter addressed to his elder brother Piero, who, of course, succeeded to the honours of the family, he

expresses the hope, alas how miserably disappointed, "that in your conduct to all, and particularly to those around you, I may find you as I could wish, beneficent, liberal, affable, humane; by which qualities there is nothing but may be obtained, nothing but may be preserved. Think not I mention this from any doubt that I entertain of thee, but because I esteem it my duty. Many things strengthen and console me: the concourse of people that surround our house with lamentations, the sad and sorrowful appearance of the whole city, the public mourning and other similar circumstances—these in a great degree alleviate my grief: what a father have we lost, I again exclaim, but his example lives for us!"[1]

Only thirty months were to elapse before both Piero and Giovanni would be driven with contumely from that Florence where now their name was one to conjure with, and the priceless Renaissance treasures of the Palazzo Medici—treasures on which Cosimo and Lorenzo had spent sums almost incredible—were scattered in an hour by the French soldiery of Charles VIII., assisted by the Florentines themselves. This insult turned Giovanni's love for his native place into dislike. By a flash of intuition he realised that the days of personal popularity as the basis of his family's rule had passed for ever. When the Medici recovered their place in Florence, it was as the recognised rulers of the State, with an official position no longer nebulously undefined, but broad-based upon the territorial dignity first of Dukes of Florence, and finally of Grand Dukes of Tuscany.

[1] Many copies of this letter exist, and nearly all of them differ in some details from the others. See the collection still preserved in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence.

These changes have little connection with our sketch of the relation of the Medici to the Renaissance. Giovanni's labours as a scholar were no longer centred in Florence. Rome was his home, and although he never hesitated to leave it and reside in Florence for a time, when he thought that thereby he could promote the interests of his house, he showed his feelings on more than one occasion to be those of bitter dislike to the Florentines, for their speedy forgetfulness of all Cosimo and Lorenzo had done for them.[1]

From 1492, when Cardinal de' Medici took up his abode in Rome, until 1513, when he was elevated to the Chair of St. Peter, his relations were with the Roman, rather than with the Florentine scholars, though on all his visits to Valdarno he was exceedingly scrupulous to show respect to the local *literati*. They were, however, sadly reduced both in numbers and reputation. Poliziano had died within two years of his patron Lorenzo, so had Pico della Mirandola and Ermolao Barbaro. Landino indeed remained, but he was aged and infirm, and the new type of scholar, which German Humanism was creating, was as yet a mere philologist, with comparatively little sympathy for the literary beauties of the classics.

In Rome several scholars of repute still remained, having survived the persecution of Paul II., whose jealousy of the Roman Academy caused him to subject its members to prison or the rack, in his desire to discover some political meaning in their meetings. But, under Alexander VI., letters, although not fostered, as might have been expected, were not retarded by any foolish prejudice on the part of the pontiff. As the

[1] Cf. Fabr. in *Vita Leon X.*, 121.

Cardinal de' Medici had opposed Borgia's election, he judged it prudent to withdraw to Florence for a time, and while there had the mortification inflicted on him to which reference has already been made.

After his expulsion from his native city, Giovanni resided for a time in various places, devoting himself to study in the hope of forgetting his troubles. As the situation did not change for the better, and as the three several attempts made by the Medici to repossess themselves of Florence, were each time defeated with additional exasperation excited in the minds of the citizens, Giovanni, in 1500, determined to travel throughout some parts of Europe in company with a party of friends. This design he carried into effect, his cousin Giulio de' Medici (afterwards Clement VII.) and ten others comprising the company. Discarding the insignia of their rank, and equipping themselves in a uniform manner, they passed through the States of Venice and Milan, visited most of the principal cities in Germany, "each assuming" (as Roscoe says[1]) "in turn the command of the troop, and partaking of all amusements afforded by continual change of place and the various manners of the inhabitants."

From Germany they proceeded to Flanders, and intended to have passed over into England, but were deterred by the stormy weather which prevailed. They therefore proceeded to France, journeying by Rouen to Marseilles, where they took ship for Genoa, arriving there early in 1502. From the last-named place they travelled to Savona, where they had the satisfaction of meeting the deadly enemy of Alexander VI., Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who,

[1] *Life and Pontificate of Leo X.*, vol. i. p. 165 (Bohn's edition).

like themselves, had been obliged to leave Rome to escape the enmity of the pontiff. Cardinal Rovere (after Julius II.) was always friendly to the Medici, and the meeting of the three was productive of many momentous consequences in the near future. It is a curious fact that the three friends who sat with each other at that inn table in Savona, all attained the tiara —Rovere as Julius II., Giovanni as Leo X., Giuliano de' Medici as Clement VII.

To his enforced tour throughout Western Europe, Cardinal Giovanni owed much. It broadened his sympathies with respect to human interests diverse from his own, it revealed to him new phases of development in Renaissance culture, for Germany was now rapidly overtaking Italy in that Lampadephoria or torch race of culture among the nations. Soon letters would find their chief home amid Transalpine rather than amid Cisalpine scenes. Reuchlin and the band of friends around him were even then beginning to render German scholarship that synonym for accuracy and profundity of learning which it has retained ever since. Erasmus also was at this early time making his influence felt in Western letters. His *Adagia* had been published in 1500, and revealed to the world that among the so-called barbarians there were scholars equal to Italy's best in attainments, and, in this case at any rate, superior to them in insight into the spirit of the classic authors. To Giovanni, taught to believe in Rome at least, though his father ever set his face against the doctrine,—that nothing good could emanate elsewhere than from Italy,—the revelation came almost as a shock. In one of his letters to his brother, he says: "Can it be possible! We are being beaten in

learning by those we deemed barbarians, and beaten, too, on ground we reckoned our own?"[1] The experience stimulated him to fresh efforts, to redeem the reproach already being cast upon Italian culture, that it was a thing of the past.

From this period forward Giovanni's interest in letters was not alone displayed in prosecuting his own literary pursuits. He became a munificent patron of learning, and like his father esteemed the company of scholars more enjoyable than that of any other class of men. To his house in the Forum Agonale[2] of Rome, he welcomed all those members of the Roman Academy who had survived the persecution of Paul II. Among these were Angelo Colocci, Paolo Cortese, Jacopo Sadoleto, the younger Beroaldo, Alessandro Farnese, and others. These scholars met at stated times in their reconstituted academy, elected a president, and engaged in discussions on literary subjects. Granted that the moral corruption of Rome at this period was, as Symonds says, almost past belief, it was a corruption at any rate veiled, as regards its grosser attributes, by a culture as delicate and dazzling as it was widely diffused.

As far as his means went, he sought to encourage genius in its development, and more than one of the great Roman scholars acknowledge their indebtedness to the cultured Cardinal de' Medici. Pietro Bembo, the great Latin elegiac poet of the Renaissance epoch, in a letter to Bernardo da Bibiena, the domestic secretary of the cardinal, says: "You will give my lord cardinal

[1] Jovius, *Vita Leonis X.*

[2] Now called Piazza Navona. See "Rome" in Dent's "Mediæval Towns Series."

the thanks I so amply owe him for the kindly and courteous interest he takes in my affairs";[1] while in his letters to Galeotto della Rovere he repeatedly acknowledges the obligations under which he and other scholars lay to Giovanni. The Pope (Alexander VI.) having realised the mistake he had made in making the cardinal his enemy, had sent him a message inviting him to return to Rome. Though many of his friends, and particularly Della Rovere, counselled Giovanni against compliance, urging that the Borgias only wished to get him into their power, that they might put him to death, Giovanni thought differently. He therefore repaired to Rome in 1502, and lived there on friendly terms with the Pope until the death of the latter in August 1503.

That the cardinal was committed to the cause of his friend Della Rovere, as the next occupant of St. Peter's Chair, is exceedingly probable. But the claims of Francesco Piccolomini, Cardinal of Siena, the nephew of Pius II. (Æneas Sylvius) were too strong to be passed over. He was accordingly elected by the Sacred College, but only held the office for twenty-six days, when he died, not without grave suspicions of poison having been employed to remove him. Cardinal della Rovere was now the principal candidate, and Giovanni exerted himself to secure his election. In this he was successful, and from this date, 29th October 1503, when Rovere, under the title of Julius II., commenced his pontificate, may be reckoned the rapid improvement in the fortunes of Cardinal Giovanni.

For his early friend, Julius entertained the warmest sentiments both of affection and of gratitude. Though

[1] Bembo, *Oper.* III., 191.

on many points of policy they differed, Giovanni henceforward became one of the most intimate counsellors of the Pope, and despite his comparative youth one of the most trusted.[1] From 1503 to 1512, when he was called upon to superintend the operations having for their end the restoration of the Medici to the chief power in Florence, Giovanni either remained in Rome transacting the private and public business of the Papacy intrusted to him by the pontiff, or accompanied him in his campaigns, against the Baglioni and Bentivogli, and later against the Venetians, the French, and other enemies. So complete was the confidence which Julius placed in the cardinal that he considered him the most fitting individual to direct the campaign initiated by the Pope, the Venetians, and the King of Aragon for the purpose of expelling the troops of Louis XII. from Italy. Under the title, therefore, of "Legate of Bologna," the supreme command of the papal troops was intrusted to him, the well-known soldier Marc-Antonio Colonna, acting as his lieutenant.

During his stay in Rome he had shown great interest in the development of Italian education, which he insisted ought to be based on a thorough knowledge of the classics. In as far as he was able he assisted in the establishment of schools,[2] a line of charitable benevolence which he was to develop still more extensively when he ascended the Chair of St. Peter. His generosity in this respect while he was a cardinal

[1] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, xi.; Jovius in *Vita Leon X.*, p. 71; Ammirato, *Ritratto di Leone X.*, p. 69.

[2] See letter from Gregorio Cortese to the cardinal published in Jovius, also letters from Bembo inserted in his works.

is all the more praiseworthy, inasmuch as he was often obliged to practise severe economy as regards his own wants, in order that his pledges to the cause of education might be redeemed. For in the attempts which the family made to achieve their restoration to Florence, their resources, and especially those of the cardinal, had been exhausted. So much was this the case that Giovanni found no little difficulty in supporting the dignity of his rank, for which his ecclesiastic revenues were quite inadequate. To the utmost of his power, as Roscoe says, he struggled with these humiliating circumstances. The liberality of his disposition too often exceeded the extent of his finances, and a splendid entertainment was at times deranged by the want of some essential but unattainable article. . . . While on the one hand he was unwilling to detract from that character of liberality and munificence which was suitable to his rank and to the high expectations which he continued to entertain; on the other hand, he dreaded the disgrace of being wanting in the strict discharge of his pecuniary engagements. He carefully avoided, however, giving, even in the lowest ebb of his fortunes, the slightest indications of despondency.[1]

While he was directing the course of the campaign against the brilliant Gaston de Foix, the general of Louis XII., the desperate and sanguinary battle of Ravenna was fought, which, after varying fortunes, was decided by the total defeat of the Papal and Spanish troops. Largely to the incapacity of the Spanish general, Cardona, was this disaster due. He

[1] Roscoe's *Leo the Tenth*, vol. i. chap. vii.

insisted on a course of action which Cardinal de' Medici, civilian though he was, could see was foredoomed to failure. The bravery of the Spanish troops, however, left the result long doubtful, but a final furious assault by Gaston de Foix at the head of his reserves drove the allied troops in rout from the field, leaving the Cardinal de' Medici and others prisoners in the hands of the victors. The success, however, was dearly bought by the death of Gaston de Foix, undoubtedly the greatest military genius in the Europe of his age, and whose untimely end, at the age of twenty-four, was deplored by both sides.

Cardinal Giovanni was not long a prisoner. The French cause in Italy was already doomed, and those to whose custody he was committed were not unwilling to secure a friend at Court, in view of a prospective reconciliation with the Papacy, by conniving at the popular churchman's escape. He exercised a mysterious fascination over all, enemies as well as friends, and strongly entrenched in obstinate resolution must he have been who could long resist the blandishments he lavished upon all who could help him. In Giovanni were united Cosimo's iron determination, Lorenzo's political sagacity, Piero's charm of manner, and his uncle Giuliano's ready sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men. To this rare combination of qualities Giovanni de' Medici owed that acknowledged superiority over his fellows which even from the first his contemporaries seemed willing to concede. "Mark my words," said Innocent VIII. to one of his cardinals, "for I shall not be here to note their fulfilment, that young man will yet become

one of the ablest Popes that has occupied the Chair of St. Peter."

The cardinal, after experiencing as many hairbreadth escapes and marvellous adventures as would furnish a popular novel-writer with matter for the most thrilling of romances, managed to make good his deliverance. No sooner had he returned to Rome, however, and received the congratulations of the Pope and Sacred College on having recovered his liberty, which a happy accident had achieved when the thunders of the Holy Father had failed, than Julius intimated to him that he was determined to restore the Medici family to their former position in Florence. This time, however, in place of being the uncrowned kings of Valdarno, Julius was resolved that they should be the titular rulers of Tuscany, and thus once for all effectually destroy the influence which France exercised in Italian affairs. In August 1512, the Spanish forces under Cardona, accompanied by the Papal troops and the Cardinal de' Medici, whose powers were defined under his commission, to act as "legate of Tuscany," appeared before Florence.

The campaign was of brief duration. On the last day of the same month the Medici re-entered Florence —their exile at an end. Pope Julius insisted that Cardinal Giovanni should personally assume the government of the city. To this the latter assented, choosing his brother Giuliano as his viceroy, and adopting, as his motto, a line which, although taken from Scripture, was eminently significant of the tight hold the Medici intended to keep on the territory, "Jugum meum suave est et onus meum leve—My yoke is easy and my burthen is light." The yoke then imposed was never

to be broken for any length of time until the year 1735,[1] and then only by the death of the reigning Grand Duke, Gastone, without issue.

No sooner was Cardinal Giovanni firmly established in the seat of his ancestors than he reverted to their policy, namely, to beguile the mind of the people from troubling themselves with the affairs of government, by seducing them into the pursuit of pleasure. The Florentines were weary of warfare and of unsettled political conditions. They had missed the quiet prosperity of the Medicean rule, with its grand spectacular entertainments and fêtes. The epoch of Savonarola and the Piagnoni, followed by that of Pietro Soderini, who, for preserving the liberties of the city from the attacks of Cæsar Borgia, had been appointed Gonfaloniere for life, had been stormy and tempestuous. The fickle burghers sighed for the restfulness of the Medicean rule, slavery though it might be termed. No sooner, therefore, had Soderini been deposed and the Medici reinstated, than the fickle Florentines settled down to the enjoyment of the plays and spectacles, which the sagacious cardinal provided, with a gusto which unmistakably manifested on which side their personal preference lay.

The cardinal and his brother Giuliano were busy therefore in restoring the customs of the old régime, and that cultured patronage of letters and the arts, which had been so carefully exercised by Lorenzo the Magnificent, when Giovanni had to depart with the utmost haste to Rome, leaving his brother to carry out the work on which they were engaged. On the

[1] The recovery of Florentine freedom in 1527 was only temporary, a brief blaze of the old patriotism and courage in Carducci and Francesco Ferruccio.

21st day of February 1513, Pope Julius II. passed away, defiant and tiger-like to the last. When next Giovanni Cardinal de' Medici visited Florence, it was as the supreme pontiff, Leo X., the 221st occupant of the "Chair of the Fisherman," and the greatest of the Humanist Popes.

Section 2.—*Leo's Pontificate*, 1513–1521

Pope—Leo X., 1513

The election of the Cardinal de' Medici to the Papacy was in the end all but unanimous. At the outset, and before his arrival—for he did not enter the Conclave until the third day—some support had been given to the Cardinal Alborese. No sooner, however, did Giovanni appear in the Consistory, and show that he had obtained the adhesion of the powerful Raffaello Riario, nephew of Sixtus IV., than the mind of the assembly gradually veered round to the Medicean candidate. Although doubtless this turn of affairs to a conclusion so favourable to his interests was greatly owing to Giovanni's secretary and conclavist, Bernardo da Bibiena, who won over Cardinal Soderini, the brother of the late Gonfaloniere of Florence, the theory is at least not improbable, that the memory of Lorenzo de' Medici's services to Italy, both as a politician and a patron of letters, united to the recognised character of this, the Magnifico's son, as a friend of Renaissance learning, also contributed to bring about the result.

Be that as it may, Roscoe is right when he says that it was "agreed on all hands that his elevation was not disgraced by that shameless traffic and open prostitu-

tion of the favours and emoluments of the Church, which had been so usual on such occasions."[1] To this might be added Guicciardini's testimony—

"Almost all Christendom was highly delighted with this election, anticipating in Pope Leo a pontiff of rare merit, to whom all were inclined by reason of his father's virtues, and of his own noted goodness of heart and nobleness of spirit, his chastity and excellence of conduct; and it was hoped, too, that after his father's example, he would show himself a patron of learning and of learned men. And these favourable expectations were strengthened by the circumstance that his election had been effected without any simony or corruption."[2]

The procession of each new pontiff to take possession of the Lateran See was usually made the occasion of rejoicings by the citizens of Rome. Giovanni's—or as we must in future designate him—Leo's personal popularity being so great, the celebration of the rite was accompanied by signs of satisfaction of so general a character, that they were long regarded as the most brilliant fêtes of the kind ever held in the "Eternal City." One and all the citizens united to do honour to the man whose accession to the Papacy was regarded as favourable to the cause alike of religion and of letters.

By the Humanists his election was hailed with a joy that had not been manifested since the days of Nicholas v. and Pius II. The glamour cast by the Medici over all and sundry, and the recollection of all Lorenzo il Magnifico had done for the Renaissance, led

[1] Roscoe, *Life and Pontificate of Leo X.*, vol. i. p. 291.

[2] Guicciardini, XI. v. ii. 32. Cf. also Jovius and Gregorovius.

the scholars of Italy to predict for Leo a pontificate as brilliant as any in the annals of the Papacy. Nor were they disappointed either in their expectations or their predictions. The epoch of Leo X. constituted the autumnal glory of Renaissance culture, as that of Lorenzo was its midsummer meridian.[1] Literature, the arts, philosophy, science, all experienced the beneficial influence of his patronage. "If I *am* the Holy Father," he said, "I must show my paternal interest in all varieties of honest human effort."[2]

His Renaissance sympathies were indicated even before he left the consistory. That the newly created pontiff should appoint his papal secretaries immediately after the public announcement of his name and title had been made, had come to be a custom in the conclave. Considerable interest was felt, therefore, among the cardinals as to the men of Leo's choice. A murmur of approbation broke from the consistory when the names of Pietro Bembo and Jacopo Sadoleto, the two most learned Humanists of their age, were proclaimed as his nominees for the offices. These first appointments were the straws on the stream of papal policy, showing the direction in which the current of Leo's inclinations were destined to flow. "*Godiamoci il Papato, poichè Dio ce l'ha dato—Let us enjoy the Papacy since God has given it to us*," was his remark to his brother after their return from the brilliant function of the Lateran; and the epigram, whose point is lost by translation, is exquisitely typical of the character of his policy. Henceforward the Papacy, according to his ideal, was not only to stand out as the centre of the spiritual life of the world, but was to become that fountain-head

[1] Fabronius, in *Vita Leon X.* [2] Jortin's *Life of Erasmus.*

of Humanism, whence the stream of stimulus towards the acquisition of an ever-broadening culture and an ever-deepening intellectual development, was to emanate for the benefit of Europe.

Rome as a city was prepared to second the efforts of the pontiff. The assurance that once more a Humanist Pope sat in the Chair of St. Peter was sufficient to cause every scholar with any pretensions to eminence to endeavour to bring himself and his work under the notice of this munificent patron. From all parts of Italy men of letters flocked to Rome. "As the magnet attracteth iron, so doth Pope Leo the Humanists," said Agostino Chigi, the witty and wealthy Siennese banker. Nor was the remark an exaggeration.

The historic events which synchronised with Leo's pontificate were neither so numerous nor of such moment as those occurring during the term of Sixtus IV. or Alexander VI., with one exception—the Reformation. Leo has had many biographers. By these his career has been carefully sketched, and the part he played in the great Reformation struggle examined and criticised from very diverse points of view. By many of them, however, the secret of Leo's attitude towards Luther and the new movement has been misunderstood. He was at heart antagonistic to neither. He was simply indifferent, because, like every Italian of that epoch, he had a supreme contempt for "barbarian Germany." He regarded the Reformation as merely an offshoot of German Humanism, which to him was a synonym for all that was barbaric. He treated it, in fact, as a negligeable quantity. From this cause, not from antagonism—although doubtless that feeling was

superinduced later, when his *comfort* began to be disturbed by the German schism—resulted Leo's attitude towards the Reformation. No student of the period, therefore, can present its historic or its literary facts and forces in their exact perspective and assign to them their relative proportion, who does not take account of the part Humanism played during the Reformation era.

Leo was a Humanist with a heart untouched by the higher influences and emotions of religion, called to deal with a purely spiritual problem. Naturally, he sought to shirk meddling with a matter whereof he realised he knew little, and about which, like Gallio, he cared less. He certainly would have preferred to leave "Brother Martin," as he called him, severely alone —whose great ability, with that tolerant *bonhomie* which always distinguished him, Leo was quite willing to admit[1]—provided the Reformer agreed to confine his philippics to hair-splitting points of scholastic doctrine.[2] Leo did not desire any war of words that would distract attention from that progressive development of culture in which all his interest was centred. In addition to this, Leo and his cardinals at the outset of the Reformation, and when they still regarded it as a mere wrangle over words among two differing groups of German scholars, felt themselves unable to adjudicate on the dispute, even had they cherished any inclination so to do. Italian and German Humanism differed as

[1] *Luther*, by Professor Henry Eyster Jacobs, D.D., LL.D. ("Heroes of the Reformation Series"), p. 90; see also a very able study of the relation of Luther and Leo in the volume on *Luther* contributed by the Rev. Professor Lindsay, D.D., to the "World's Epoch-Makers Series."

[2] Cf. Leo's letter to the General of the Augustinian Order.

much in essence as in degree of scholarship. In Italy the works of the ancients were studied for the sciences they contained and for the literary beauties wherewith they were replete; in Germany, largely for the aid they offered towards the study of philosophy and theology, as well as to the elucidation of the text of the Word of God. Italian Humanism therefore was more ornamental, German more utilitarian, in their respective aims.

Leo, as we have said, was simply an Italian Humanist, with complications thrust upon him at a critical and crucial historic juncture with which by training as well as temperament he was utterly unfitted to cope. Despite all the liberty of sentiment he had derived from his tour throughout Europe, his early environment cribbed and confined his sympathies. The healthy growth and expansion of his intellectual life had been pot-bound by the prejudices of that early environment. Had his marvellously liberal-minded father lived thirty years longer—that is, until he had reached his seventy-second year—he would have widened the ideas of Italian scholars respecting the work of their trans-alpine fellow-Humanists. But to Leo, as to nine out of every ten of the *literati* of Italy, a German scholar was a barbarian, and German scholarship a barbarous compound of error and ignorance. Only when Reuchlin, Erasmus, Pirckheimer, Mutianus Rufus, Crotus Rubianus, Johann Cæsarius, Hermann von Busch, Conrad Celtes, and Eobanus Hessus, revealed to the Italians, depths of spiritual meaning in the classics, which all the Roman, Florentine, and Neapolitan scholars had failed to extract therefrom, did the Cisalpine Humanists admit that even among barbarians "there might be

culture of a kind."[1] Professor C. H. Herford, in that admirable volume of his which no student who would know this period thoroughly can afford to ignore, *The Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century*, sums up the case of "barbarian Germany" in the following pregnant words:—

"If the extraordinarily gifted yet relatively barbarous Germany of the sixteenth century was in pure literature of any moment for its neighbours, it was chiefly so in so far as it made literary capital of its barbarism. Its moods of ideal aspiration, its laborious efforts to honour virtue and nobility, its pictures of pure women and heroic patriots counted for little. . . . Even the Humanists of Germany, proficients though they were in the graces of Humanist style, commonly arrived at European fame, if at all, by some other channel. Had Horace, like Frischlein's Cicero, revisited the upper world, Northern Europe could have shown him no Latin lyrics so graceful and sparkling as those of Celtes and Hessus; but Celtes and Hessus remained provincial stars when Markolf and Ulenspiegel and the Ship of Fools had the ear of Europe; and all the fascinating brilliancy of Hutten did not save him from being celebrated abroad as the advocate of an unedifying drug. It was not in her casual and fitful wooing of beauty that Germany caught the attention of the world, but when she grappled with ugliness, plunging breast-high in the slough, and derisively impaling the creeping population of foul things."

This great fact, however, which Leo failed to understand, was the cause of his inability to perceive the significance of that train of circumstances leading up to the Reformation. Everyone save those in the immediate *entourage* of Leo, where similar sentiments to

[1] Bembo to Sadoleto.

his own regarding the comparative barbarism of German life and letters prevailed,[1] realised that sooner or later a disruption must take place in the Roman Church in Germany. To give him his due, Leo was a man who fain would have practised the policy of *laissez faire*, as soon as the publication of the XCV. Theses let the fact be understood that Luther was in earnest. He would simply have "enjoyed the Papacy" in his own easy-going way in the Vatican, allowing Luther the while to shout himself hoarse in Germany, confident as the pontiff was that as the Roman Church was founded by St. Peter, and Peter was the "Rock" divinely appointed by Christ as that whereon He would found His "Ecclesia," the gates of hell itself would not prevail against it.

But Leo was not to be allowed to play the tolerant Humanist towards the Reformation. Sylvester Mazzolini or Pierias was the Marplot whose impetuosity proved the spark that fired the pile. He refused to see in Luther's Theses "the ravings of a drunken barbarian German who would think differently when sober,"[2] and he urged the Pope to cite Luther to Rome. We desire to emphasise this fact in connection with Leo's reported attitude towards the Reformer, namely, that he long resisted any attempt to place him in antagonism to a man who, he could not fail to note, was supported by many of the leading Humanists in Germany. Ere long, however, the curious anomaly

[1] One has only to study the letters of contemporary observers, not necessarily men of letters, and the remarks of contemporary literary critics, to have this conviction proved up to the hilt. The works of Ulrich von Hutten, Crotus Rubianus, Eobanus Hessus, Mutianus Rufus, Reuchlin, Erasmus, etc., furnish abundant evidence.

[2] Leo's remark on the literary composition of the Theses.

was witnessed of the Humanist Pope actually championing the cause of those who were antagonistic to the cause of the "New Learning," the Hoogenstratens, the Köllins, the Meyers, the Tungerns, *et hoc genus omne*, not forgetting the pilloried prophet of the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*—Ortuinus Gratius! Had Leo's own inclinations been consulted there would assuredly have been no prosecuting of Luther, and in all probability the German Reformation would have sought a different outlet.

But our object is not to trace Leo's relations to the Reformation further than to say, that *so far* he was even in favour of many of the early doctrines of the new movement, until they began to trench upon the revenues of the Papacy. The luxury-loving pontiff, to whose artistic nature the impossibility of gratifying his craving after what was æsthetically attractive in literature and art, presented itself in the light of an infinitely more serious calamity than any temporary eclipse of the Roman Catholic creed in Germany, was only roused when Peter's Pence[1] began to fail. The man who questioned the doctrines of the Papacy might or might not be worthy of censure, but the man or the monk who interfered with the revenues of the Papacy and diverted, be it ever so slightly, the Pactolean stream which flowed from the pockets of the faithful to the purse of St. Peter, was, without the least shadow of doubt, a desperate heretic, one for whom the "anathema maranatha" of excommunication would scarcely be sufficient punishment.

[1] The term "Peter's Pence" is used here to indicate the offerings of the faithful of all lands to the pontiff, although, strictly speaking, the phrase is only applicable to England.

We have at some length indicated Leo's relations to German Humanism, inasmuch as his attitude to the Reformation was so largely influenced by them. To this phase of his life's work we do not intend to revert, preferring rather to refer readers to Professor Lindsay's able volume on *Luther* in this series, for further information on the subject. Leo's attitude to Italian Humanism, however, must necessarily be considered with some degree of fulness, because to his efforts Italy and through Italy Europe, owed many reforms in education and *belles lettres*, the benefits of which we enjoy to-day.

Before doing so, however, we must record in a few sentences the character of Leo's temporal as distinguished from his ecclesiastical and literary policy, and the effect it produced upon Europe. Leo X. was conspicuously lacking in that political ability which distinguished his father and great-grandfather. Greater by far as a literary Mæcenas than as a diplomatist, to his blundering was due more than one of those complications which arose in Italy during his pontificate. The Sack of Rome in 1527, though proximately attributable to the hesitation and vacillation of his cousin Clement VII., was only the ultimate result of the political policy of Leo X., who coquetted first with France against Spain to secure the kingdom of Naples for his brother Giuliano; then, when the latter died, with Spain against France to aggrandise his nephew Lorenzo with Milan, Urbino, and Ferrara,—seeking, in a word, to play the one monarch off against the other, with the Papacy as the deciding factor when it threw its influence into the scale of the stronger. He it was, in fine, who invited the Emperor Charles V. into Italy to drive

the French out of it.[1] By Roscoe and others of Leo's panegyrists the attempt is made to minimise the pontiff's guilt. No juggling with words, however, can obscure this damning fact, sufficient of itself to blacken the memory of Leo until the crack of doom, that it was in response to his invitation, proffered some years before, that Charles let loose Frundsberg and his dogs of war on the unhappy country in 1527.[2] To say the Pope was dead when the black deed was wrought is no palliation. Kings have long memories, and Leo when he urged Charles to pour his legions over the Alps knew what would happen when the ferocious and hungry Spaniards would be let loose over the fair plains of Italy, namely, that their progress would be written in characters of blood and fire from Ravenna to Rome! On Leo, not on Clement, it was that Charles v. sought to shift the responsibility for that awful crime.[3] To say that the soldiers became maddened by indulgence and went beyond their instructions, relieves neither Leo nor Charles from blood-guiltiness, but the former is the greater offender of the two.

The political policy of Leo x. was undiluted selfishness; but was not this the character of the entire Medicean rule from Cosimo's recall in 1434 to the death of the Grand Duke Gastone of Tuscany in 1733? "Myself, my family and the Holy See," were the sole objects of Leo's interest, and, as was added by the witty Pietro Aretino, the order in which they are named was that of their relative importance to him as the spiritual head of

[1] Cf. Gregorovius and Pastor; also Franc Vettori, *Archiv. Stor.*; Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte* (4 Aufl.), ii. 260 ff.

[2] Varchi, *Storia Fioren.*, i. 42–47.

[3] See the letters recently discovered in the Vatican Library.

Christendom. Leo's aim was to partition Northern Italy to aggrandise his family, and it was in pursuance of this policy that he took away the territories of Guido, Duke of Urbino, and gave them to his kinsman Lorenzo. Had he lived much longer, it is more than probable that he would have done what both Sixtus IV. and Alexander VI. tried hard to accomplish but failed, namely, to secularise the Papacy and render the Pontifical States the hereditary dominions of his house.[1] At the time of his death he had again convulsed the Italian peninsula with strife, in which the unhappy country was but the cockpit wherein the great European nations could fight out their differences. Milan had been captured by the allied Papal and Imperial troops. Ferrara had been invested by them, when like a thunder-clap the intelligence broke over Europe that Leo X. was dead (1st December, 1521). Within a fortnight the entire aspect of affairs was changed. Those who had been enemies became friends, and the cause for which Leo had well-nigh bartered his soul fell like a house of cards.

Suspicion was rife that the Pope had not met a natural end and that poison had been employed to remove him. To this suspicion there was much to give colour, not the least feature being the haste with which he was interred. That the Duke of Ferrara or the Duke of Urbino had bribed one of Leo's servants to commit the crime, has always been considered probable, but definite evidence is unobtainable, and if it ever existed it has possibly long since been destroyed.[2]

[1] Cf. Armstrong, Roscoe, and Symonds on this point.

[2] Fabronius, *Vita Leon X.*, 239.

Section 3.—*Leo the Humanist Pope*

Pope—Leo x., 1513

To turn from Leo the diplomatist to Leo the Humanist is a decided relief, albeit the moral atmosphere affected by His Holiness as a scholar was not a whit more free from chicanery and fraud than that in which the pontiff as a politician was wont to live.

The Rome of Leo x. was at one and the same time the sink of all the European vices, as Lorenzo the Magnifico styled it,[1] and the centre of all the European culture of the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The latest flower of the Italian Renaissance reached its maturity in his pontificate; nor was this fact the least of the glories of his age, that the blossom of classic culture bore, as its fairest fruit, that highly developed and sensuously beautiful vernacular literature, contained in the works of writers of such unquestioned ability as Ariosto, Sannazaro, Molza, Berni, Machiavelli, Castiglione, Bandello, etc. Though frankly pagan in its religious sentiments, though placing Socrates side by side with Christ as a benefactor to humanity, though preferring Hellenic ethics to the Christian morality that found its highest expression in personal purity and individual holiness, still, one must make allowance for the equation of "fashion" in estimating the prevalence of the pagan mode. To imitate the ancients was for the time "the vogue" in letters, and everything was shaped to suit that ruling

[1] In his letter to his son, who as much as any other of his predecessors assisted in corrupting it. Cf. Lorenzo's letter to Cardinal Giovanni, p. 206.

mode. Even in christening their children, those who advanced any claims to culture set a seal on their pretensions by calling their offspring by such bizarre titles as Annibale, Atalanta, Laomedonte, Pentesilea, Cesare, Galatea, Achille, Ettorre, Ercole, Aspasia, Ippolito, Portia, Fedro, Lucrezia, etc. All who could, converted their baptismal names into Latin or Greek equivalents. Janus or Jovianus passed for Giovanni, Pierius for Pietro, Aonius for Antonio, Lucius Grassus for Luca Grasso; while the Roman professor Gianpaolo Parisio figured as Janus Parrhasius. According to the classicism of the sixteenth century, God was styled *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*; Providence appears as *Fatum*, the saints are *Divi*, the Pope becomes the *Pontifex Maximus*, Peter and Paul are *Dii Tutelares Romæ*, and the souls of the just were *Manes pii*, while the cardinals were *Augures*, and the nuns "Vestal Virgins." Every feast and service in the Church was obliged to assume its pagan synonym or counterpart, and the wildest confusion of ideas was complacently tolerated in order that "Ciceronianism" pure and undefiled might rule the taste of the hour. The extravagant length to which this fad was carried may be seen by those who will take the trouble to read Bembo's *History of Venice*, Vida's *Christiad*, Pontanus's *Urania*, or Sannazaro's *De Partu Virginis*. As Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away in Don Quixote, so Erasmus laughed "Ciceronianism" out of fashion, by his genial satire *Ciceronianus*, which united in itself an irony as keen as the edge of a Damascus scimitar with a Latinity as pure as that of Bembo or Sadoleto themselves.

Leo was a Ciceronian and did much to give the folly

its vogue. But if that fault has to be urged against him, we can adduce countervailing benefits rendered by him to letters which cover a multitude of such sins. That great expectations had been entertained by the Humanists regarding the benefits their class would reap from the election of so cultured a Pope can still be verified from the testimony of contemporary literature.[1] But their wants were quite beyond the ability of the pontiff to satisfy, inasmuch as each writer considered his claims to distinction paramount to those of all the others. In this connection, Ariosto's Third Satire should be carefully studied as a biting piece of raillery on papal promises and their performance.[2]

Among those beneficent undertakings, however, which Leo *was* able to achieve, not the least was the re-establishment on a firm basis of the Sapienza, or College founded by Eugenius IV. for the study of the classics, philosophy, science, and eloquence. By richly endowing the various chairs he thus provided that only the best scholars would be called to occupy them. From the original roll of the Roman Academy, as it existed in 1514, the year after its re-establishment by Leo,[3] we note that the number of professors whose salaries were paid out of the funds provided by the Pope was ninety-three. The subjects on which they prelected were the canon and civil law, rhetoric, moral philosophy, theology, logic, and mathematics. Chairs were also founded in medicine, botany, and the medical science of

[1] See the panegyrics of Philomusus, *Exultatio in creatione Leonis X.*, and of Valerianus, *Ad Leonem X.* These are but specimens of upwards of twenty others which could be named as still extant.

[2] Ariosto's Third Satire, to Annibale Malaguzzi.

[3] It still exists in the Castle of St. Angelo. Its contents were published by the Abate Marini in 1797.

plants. Among the professors were Lascaris, Musurus, Valerianus, Antinorus, Varino, Ambrogio, Bembo, Trissino, and many others whose names will be mentioned hereafter. The Sapienza was of great benefit to the Roman youth, and if Leo had done nothing else than reorganise this institution he achieved a work worthy of commemorating his name.

To mention every learned beneficiary of the great Humanist Pope would be quite beyond the scope of our sketch. Among the first things which Leo did after his accession to the Papacy, was the establishment of a Greek press in Rome. In charge of this he placed the celebrated John Lascaris, with instructions to associate with himself as many of the leading scholars then resident in Rome as he might require as readers for the press. Nor did Leo confine his favours to Aldus and Lascaris. To Lorenzo Francesco de' Alopa he also extended patronage, and at his instigation an edition of four of the dramas of Euripides, also a second edition of Callimachus, as well as Porphyry and some of the earlier books of the *Iliad* were issued, all of these being intended for the use of the Sapienza.

But to continue our sketch of the scholars who found their sphere in Rome during the epoch of Leo! In classical learning. Musurus and Aldus Manutius,[1] by the publication of their edition of Plato, justified the great favour shown them by the pontiff. The dedication to Leo, though standing in the name of Aldus, the printer, really expressed the sentiments of both collaborators. One of the most distinguished of Italian

[1] Aldus Manutius received many tokens of Leo's favour, not the least being the monopoly granted him for fifteen years of printing in the Aldine or Italic type, whereof he was the inventor.

Humanists of that age was Guarino Favorino, or in the Latinised form, Varinus Favorinus[1] (1465–1537). A student of Poliziano, he prided himself upon carrying the precepts of that great scholar into all the work he achieved during his busy career. He was the first of the Renaissance *literati* to make a collection of the grammatical tracts on the Greek language, selected from the fragmentary critical remains of some thirty-four of the ancient grammarians,—a work entailing enormous labour and patient investigation, which Henry Stephens many years after completed in his *Thesaurus Linguæ Græcæ*. To the labours of Varino also we owe a translation into Latin of Stobæus's collection of Greek apothegms, and finally that great Greek lexicon bearing his name which for many years was to take rank as the standard Thesaurus of the Greek language. His position as librarian in the family of the Medici, first when Giovanni was Cardinal and later when he was Pope, afforded him that leisure and access to literature, ancient and modern, indispensable to anyone contemplating a work such as that referred to, which he naturally regarded as his *magnum opus*.

Scipione Forteguerra of Pistoia (1467–1513), also better known by the Hellenised form of his surname Cateromachus, was another scholar of distinction to whom Leo showed exceptional favour. He too was a pupil of Poliziano, and like Varino endeavoured to practise on all occasions the critical principles formulated by the Florentine Humanist. Scipione is, however, one who lives more in the testimony borne by others to his talents and achievements than in any works that have come down to us. His writings have all disappeared

[1] The name often appears in the form Varino Camerti.

save an oration in praise of Greek literature recited by him before a noble audience in Venice in 1504; and a few epigrams in Latin and Greek, which bear the stamp of a cultured and richly endowed mind. Leo was deeply attached to him, as they had been companions in youth, and had already bestowed testimonies of his goodwill upon him when Scipione died only six months after his friend's election to the Papacy.

Fra Urbano Valeriano Bolzanio of Belluno (1440–1524)—better known as Valerianus—was one who, as a youth, endeavoured to expand his mind by foreign travel. Although a monk, he quitted the cloister and travelled on foot through Greece, Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Arabia, and elsewhere. He published little, but as a teacher and as a corrector of the press for the Aldi at Venice, where he resided for upwards of forty years, he rendered immense services to the cause of the Renaissance. His grammar of the Greek language, written in a Latin style as graceful as it was accurate, was praised by Erasmus as the best of its time.

We have already noted the applause with which Leo's appointment of Bembo (1470–1547) and Sadoleto (1477–1547) as his papal secretaries had been greeted by the Sacred College. These two men were the ornaments of his Court in Rome. Proficient as they were in almost every branch of human learning then cultivated, they acquired especial fame by the purity of their Latin style. They were leading advocates of *Ciceronianism*, it is true, but their eminence in other pursuits excused their somewhat intolerant bigotry on that point. Bembo's Latin writings are but few in comparison to his Italian, but they are pre-eminently good, as, for example, his epic on *Aetna*. His poems on Lucrezia

Borgia have done much to rescue the name of that yellow-tressed temptress from the infamous scandals which clustered round it. Sadoleto produced rather more than Bembo in Latin, but both of them seem to have practised literally Horace's maxim with regard to their writings, "*Siquid tamen olim scripseris . . . nonumque prematur in annum*[1]—If thou ever writest aught, see to it that it leaves not thy hands until nine years of revision have passed." Sadoleto's poem on the Laocoon, his treatise on education, *De Liberis Instituendis*, and his Latin tracts on various subjects, have all been praised by competent judges as being couched in Latin that is only inferior to that of Poliziano and Buchanan. To Bembo and Sadoleto the Sapienza owed much, and many years later prelates of eminence were wont to pride themselves on the fact, "I was a pupil of Sadoleto and Bembo."

Nor must we forget the poet Augurelli (1441–1524), whose epic "Chrysopœia," on the art of making gold, embodied the results of certain alchemical experiments he had pursued. Having dedicated the poem to Leo X., the pontiff summoned him to the Vatican and, in the presence of his cardinals, gravely presented Augurelli with a large, handsome but *empty* purse, adding that to the man who could make gold, nothing but a purse was lacking.[2] In addition to this poem Augurelli wrote others which had great popularity in their day, such as his *Geronticon*, or "Old Age," and his *Iambici Sermones* and *Carmina*. Despite the unfavourable opinion of Julius Cæsar Scaliger, many critics have ranked Augurelli as only second to Poliziano.

[1] *De Arte Poetica*, l. 387.

[2] Fabronius, *Vita Leon X.*, p. 220.

His style is exceedingly graceful and natural, while his moral tone is much higher than that of any of his fellow-poets.

To omit mention of Jacopo Sannazaro (1454–1530) would be to overlook one of the few Renaissance writers of Latin verse, the popularity of whose works has remained to the present day. This distinction he owes, however, rather to his Italian romance *Arcadia*—the model on which Sir Philip Sidney founded his delightful English classic—than to the intrinsic interest of his *De Partu Virginis*, his piscatory eclogues, and his elegies. Leo died before he could receive the honour of the dedication of the *De Partu Virginis*. Not to be beaten, and that the composition of the dedication, upon which he had spent such infinite pains, might not be thrown away, he slightly altered the terms of it and made it apply to the second Medicean Pope, Clement VII. Sannazaro, with those other Humanists whom we have named, did much to preserve the purity of the Latin style of the period. His Italian works, to be mentioned presently, exercised also a salient influence on the current standard of the vernacular. For, in his day, the remarkable spectacle was witnessed of two literary media used with grace and precision by the same parties.

Sannazaro was one of a contemporary group of Latin poets, all of whom contested pride of place with Bembo, Sadoleto, and himself. One of the most distinguished of these, and a scholar, moreover, held in great regard by Leo, was Marco Girolamo Vida (1475–1566), whose works have been largely read in Europe even to the present day, owing to his clear easy style and the beauty of his word-painting. His poems

comprised three books of *De Arte Poetica*; another entitled *Bombyx*, dealing with the rearing of silk-worms; a third, *Scacchiae Ludus*, on the game of chess. The last of these specially attracted the attention of Leo, who considered the theme beyond the power of any poet to render interesting. Vida's success in doing so rendered his triumph all the greater. But the piece by which he has chiefly been, and will continue to be, known to fame is his *Christiad*, or "Life of Christ." In this great Latin poem, to which Milton undoubtedly was under obligations, the author rises at times to a height of true sublimity, whither few indeed of his contemporaries could follow him.

Another scholar-poet whose talents raised him to high position in the esteem of the pontiff and of his contemporaries was Girolamo Fracastorio (1483–1553), whose name and fame would be greater to-day but for the title and subject of his greatest work. Our readers can judge of the moral depravity of the Renaissance period when we state that two of the most popular poems of that epoch, which may be said to have opened with the accession of Cosimo de' Medici to his family honours in 1428, and to have closed with the Sack of Rome in 1527, were Beccadelli's *Hermaphroditus* and Fracastorio's *Syphilis*. That men whose ability was unquestionable, who showed that on other themes they could write with delicacy purity, and noble elevation, should condescend to describe scenes the most degrading and a disease the most loathsome; that such works, moreover, should be applauded by many of the clergy, read by successive popes, and should bring their authors both fame and fortune, gives one a terrible idea of the festering sore

of moral corruption that lay hidden beneath the flowers and the gay garlands, the æsthetic culture and artistic development of the Italian Renaissance. Notwithstanding the repulsive nature of the theme, some of Fracastorio's pictures of natural scenery were admitted by Milton to be unsurpassed in literature.

Still another of the group of Latin poets patronised by Leo was Andrea Navagero (1483–1528), who, both as scholar and poet, did much to form the taste of the age of Leo. His critical judgment was so delicate that, although most generous in his estimate of the work of others, he never felt satisfied with aught of his own. To the flames, therefore, he committed nearly all he had written; what appears under his name now being those compositions of which he had given copies to friends. He was the Niccoló de Niccoli of the age of Leo. His taste was so true, his judgment so unerring, his mind so unprejudiced, that half the *literati* of the period were in the habit of submitting their work to his revision before publication. The poems he has left, and which were collected in one volume, justify the high estimation in which he was held.

Among the other Latin poets whose celebrity in their day warrant mention in such a sketch as this we would name Marc Antonio Flaminio (1498–1550), who, although he did not attempt any sustained work, by his Odes, Eclogues, Hymns, Elegies, and Epistles, attained a prominent position in the esteem of Leo and his friends; the three Capilupi, Laelio, Ippolito, and Camillo; Trifone Benzio (1485–1549), whose Latin philosophical poems even yet repay perusal; Achilli Bocchi (1490–1563), whose acquaintance with Greek and Hebrew was so intimate as to arouse a suspicion

he had dealings with the Evil One; Gabriello Faerno (1488–1564), whose metrical fables were written in Latin of such classic purity as to give colour to the report he had discovered and availed himself of the unpublished works of Phædrus; Postumo Silvestri (1479–1521), whose friendship with Leo was so intimate that he usually accompanied him on his hunting expeditions, and who, moreover, has celebrated the pontificate of his friend in terms that do credit both to his head and to his heart. Giovanni Mozzarello (1490–1518) was another who, as Roscoe says, by his wit and vivacity contributed to the amusement of Leo in his hours of leisure. For warmth of sentiment, grace, and eloquence of diction and wealth of poetic fancy, Mozzarello falls not far short of Catullus. His elegies and epigrams were based upon those of the great Roman elegist. Space only remains to mention Pontanus, the poet of nuptial love whose three books, *De Amore Conjugati*, present glowing pictures of domestic bliss, the Torriani, Amalteo Bonfadio, and Archio, all of whom spent some time at least in Rome and enjoyed the patronage of the pontiff.[1] One class remains, namely, those *Improvvisatori* who, imitating the example of their Italian brethren, poured forth, at those splendid banquets Leo was in the habit of giving at the Vatican, spontaneous effusions in Latin on such subjects as the doings of the hour suggested, effusions often of wretched enough quality. But what of that? They served to pass away an hour of the day to that weary

[1] Had space permitted we should have wished to mention the work of Onorato Fascitelli, Basilio Zanchii, Benedetto Lampridio, Adamo Fumani—who all did excellent service by their Latin poetry and critical labours. *Cf.* Roscoe, *Leo*, chaps. xvi. and xvii.

dissatisfied man calling himself "The Vicar of Christ," whose pleasures one by one were turning into "Dead Sea Fruit" before him. Brandolini, Morone, Querno, Gazoldo, and Britonio were the chief cultivators of this improvised type of verse, which of course was not intended to live.

But Leo would not have been the son of his father had he neglected to patronise the works in the vernacular of poets whose fame he certainly assisted in establishing, if he was not the first to introduce them to the notice of the public. Sannazaro, though most of his Italian poems were produced before the pontificate of Leo, nevertheless in various odes and elegies, written at this time, proved that his devotion to Latin verse had not affected his faculty of pouring forth strains as vigorous and inspiring in sentiment as they were graceful and elegant in metrical construction. Antonio Tebaldo (1463–1537) was one of the earliest of Leo's panegyrists, and tradition records the pontiff to have been so delighted with an epigram sent him by the poet, written both in Latin and Italian, that he presented him with 500 ducats. Tebaldo produced no long poem, and is accused by Muratori of having corrupted the Italian tongue by his vicious critical taste in using foreign terms. Bernardo Accolti was in his age the most famous of all Italian poets. Pietro Aretino states that "when it was known in Rome that the celestial Bernardo Accolti intended to recite his verses, the shops were shut up as for a holiday, and all persons hastened to partake of the entertainment." He further states that on one occasion he was sent by Leo to request that Accolti would favour him with a visit, as he had promised. No sooner did the poet make his appearance

LOS GATOS [illegible]
LOS GATOS, CALIFORNIA

in the Hall of St. Peter than the Pope called out, "Open all the doors and let in the crowd." Accolti then recited a *Ternale* in honour of the Virgin, with which his auditors were so delighted that they shouted "Long live the divine poet, the unparalleled Accolti." Though most of his writings have been lost, such fragments as remain give us by no means so exalted an idea of his merits. His poems are stilted and bombastic in expression and trifling in thought. His *Strambotti*, his dramatic poem *Virginia*, and some elegies are all that remain of this once famous writer.

To Bembo, both as man of letters and dictator of Italian literature after Poliziano, we have already more than once referred. He was well worthy of high praise, inasmuch as he revived a taste in Tuscan literature by his Italian poems. His *Canzoni* and *Sonetti*, however, although admirable specimens of that kind of literature, are too cold and statuesque to please modern taste. The warmth of human sentiment and the emotions of flesh-and-blood humanity are absent from them. His connection with Leo was most intimate, and he has left many anecdotes of the pontiff's sayings and doings.

Francesco Molza (1489–1528), a man of talent the most profound but of morals the most depraved, who in his Italian poems combined beauty of thought with great metrical excellence, was also one of Leo's beneficiaries. The first draft of his poem *La Ninfa Tiberina* was dedicated to Leo and was highly praised by him.

But undoubtedly the greatest poet of this epoch was one who to this day is read with admiration and delight by all who can enjoy him in the vernacular, and one whose delicious verse loses less than most by translation, so that English readers can peruse the *Orlando Furioso*

with, comparatively speaking, little loss of the beauty of the original. Ariosto, in common with others, repaired to Rome after Leo had been elected to the Chair of St. Peter, expecting to obtain some mark of his favour. The pontiff's patronage, however, for the time being at least, seems to have been exhausted. Though he received his early friend with great kindness, the poet had to depart disappointed that no substantial mark of Leo's favour was conferred on him. He waited for a few days in Rome, then, becoming impatient, left the Eternal City in disgust. After some unpleasant experiences with the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, to whom he had dedicated the first cantos of his great poem, he went to Ferrara. Here, under the patronage of Duke Alfonso, the remainder of his life was spent in dignified ease and contentment. Ferrara's lord was delighted to have Italy's greatest living poet resident near him, and treated him with marked consideration. Ariosto remained on friendly terms with Leo until the date of the pontiff's death, but he never asked him for another favour. Leo sent him several marks of his regard which Ariosto accepted. The story that he returned them with a sneer, that he no longer needed them, has been proved to be one of the fictions of Jovianus. Ariosto had the courage to break away from the Petrarchan bondage, in which nearly all the Italian poets of the age lay bound. Hence he not only secured for himself "naturalness" alike in style and subject, but vindicated his own originality.

Among others who adorned the epoch of Leo were Trissino, who first introduced blank verse into Italian poetry, so that a closer imitation of the classics might be attainable. His epic *Italia Liberata* and his

tragedy *Sofonisba* are still read. He exercised great influence upon his contemporaries, in stimulating them towards attempting a purification of taste and style in Italian verse. His efforts in this direction were surpassed by a man of greater ability than he, a kinsman of the Medici, and one who inherited all their love of culture—Giovanni Rucellai. He was one of the four sons of Bernardo Rucellai by his wife Nannina, sister of Lorenzo il Magnifico, and was greatly loved and trusted by Leo. His tragedy of *Oreste* and his didactic poem *Le Api* were exceedingly popular for many a day after the author's death. His diction is pure without being colourless, while his warmth of fancy and keenness of intellect lend a charm to his writings rivalled by few of his contemporaries. Luigi Alamanni (1495–1570) was another ornament of the Humanist pontiff's Court whose satires and lyrics were so admired by Leo that he always had a copy of them beside him.

But Leo's admiration was not alone confined to the work of male writers—Vittoria Colonna, Marchioness of Pescara, whose *Stanze and Canzone* were only excelled by those of Ariosto; Veronica Gambara, Countess of Correggio,[1] whose *Sonnets*, founded on the Petrarchan model, were in great request during her lifetime; Costanza d'Avalos, Duchess of Amalfi, whose poems are usually bound up with those of Veronica Gambara; Laura Terracina of Naples, Laura Battiferra of Urbino, and Gaspara Stampa of Padua were all imitators of Petrarch, whose poems can even yet be perused with pleasure and profit.

To pass from the age of Leo without indicating a

[1] The patroness of Correggio the painter.

type of literature which if it did not date its rise from his pontificate was certainly perfected during it, would be a culpable oversight. We refer to Jocose Satire. To the closing decades of the preceding century its origin was due, and to Lorenzo de' Medici, Burchiello, Franco, and Luigi Pulci as its authors, but owing to many reasons had fallen into disrepute. Francesco Berni revived it for the amusement of the life-weary pontiff, in which effort he was assisted by Francesco Mauro, and Gian-Francesco Bini, Teofilo Folengo, Giovanni della Casa, and Lodovico Dolce. The pursuit of Satire became popular, and fresh impetus was given to it when Folengo invented *Macaronic verse*, in which by a bizarre mixture of the Latin and Italian with the various dialects of the populace, and by applying the forms of one language to the phrases of another, he produced a kind of mongrel tongue, which by its singularity and variety of effects has become popular among satiric poets as a medium for their pleasantries.

But while poetry was the chief source of interest to Leo, he was too true a Humanist and had inherited too much of his father's spirit, to refuse his patronage to any department of literature. Hence we find him encouraging both Platonists and Aristotelians alike to set themselves sedulously to the complete elucidation of the text of their respective philosophers. To Niccolo Tomeo and Pietro Pomponazzo, both of Padua, he addressed, through his datary, a warm invitation to remove to Rome and to lend their services to the Sapienza. Though neither of them permanently settled in the Eternal City, there is reason to believe that they both lectured for a season, the former on

Aristotle, the latter on Plato. Another great Aristotelian was Agostino Nifo, who actually did settle in Rome and joined the staff of the Sapienza. Giovan-Francesco Pico della Mirandola, nephew of the great Giovanni Pico, the friend of Lorenzo il Magnifico,[1] was another whose talents cast a lustre over the age. While almost as versatile as his great relative, his works treating of topics in well-nigh every field of intellectual labour,—poetry, theology, antiquities, natural philosophy, morals, translations from the Greek, etc.[2]—like his uncle he was an enthusiastic Platonist, and in his chief book *De Rerum Praenotione* has warmly combated many of Aristotle's doctrines. He was a frequent visitor at the Court of Leo, and delivered at least two courses of lectures in Rome.

Science as well as philosophy prospered under the Humanist pontiff's patronage. Until about 1500, judicial astrology usurped the place of a true scientific method. Most of the leading rulers of the epoch kept their State astrologer, whom they consulted before embarking on any enterprise, just as to-day our modern system provides for the appointment of Government meteorologists to furnish us with weather forecasts. Although not entirely free from superstition, Leo strove to divest science of its unworthy attributes. The early attempts of Italian scholars to investigate the phenomena of nature were uncertain and timid. One of the first who applied himself to this subject was Cecco d' Ascoli, who may justly be called the Father of Italian

[1] The use of this title is almost necessary, seeing there were no fewer than five of the name—Lorenzo de' Medici—who attained to some degree of historic eminence.

[2] Tiraboschi, vii. i. 396–398.

Science.[1] But as he was burned in 1327, by sentence of the Inquisition, for his temerity in asserting that which two centuries later no thinker would have dreamt of denying, his fate checked investigation along similar lines for many years to come. Paolo Toscanelli—who in 1468 erected the gnomon in the Cathedral of Florence, and who also communicated to Columbus, through Fernando Martinez, his chart of navigation, which suggested to the great Genoese his idea of a continent beyond the Western Sea—was another who handed on the torch of science, though with fear and trembling. The wretchedly trifling character of the science of the sixteenth century can be gauged, if one will but take the pains to read the treatises of Pontanus on botany and astronomy, and those of Fracastorio on physical geography and herbology. Timid and trifling though it was, Leo earnestly set himself to foster the progress and development of scientific method. "If I am to be remembered after death as a patron of letters, I should wish science to be included in my claims to remembrance." To the reformation of the Calendar he paid great attention. At his instigation, several learned treatises were produced by Joannes Navariensis, Paul of Middleburg, Basilio Lapi, and Antonius Dulciatus —all of whom devoted themselves to the discovery of the correct date for the observance of Easter.[2] Leo's death put an end, for the time being, to these schemes for reform, for his successor Adrian VI. cared for none of these things, while Clement VII., although a Medici, had his hands filled with other business. Accordingly Gregory XIII. in 1582, by the

[1] See his poem *L'Acerba.*

[2] Fabronius in *Vita Leon X.*, 275.

reformation of the Calendar, reaped the honour really belonging to Leo, inasmuch as the former did little more than publish the results of Leo's investigations.

To the study of natural history and botany Leo was ever warmly attached. To his father's marvellous versatility was due the fact that at the villa of Poggio-a-Cajano,[1] he maintained what may be termed "zoological gardens," where he could study the habits of animals; while at Careggi were located his aviary and his botanical gardens, where ornithology and the propagation of plants were pursued with conspicuous success. Leo, from early boyhood, therefore, had been imbued with an interest in these sciences, and this he showed, when to the issue of sumptuous editions of Pliny and of Dioscorides he lent substantial aid. Although it was not till twenty-six years after Leo's death —when the commentaries of Mattioli on Dioscorides were published—that botany began to advance to the dignity of a science distinct from medical therapeutics, it owed much to Leo's munificence in granting assistance for the prosecution of these experiments which were to prove of such value to Mattioli.

The science of Ethics, in those days regarded as distinct from philosophy, inasmuch as it was supposed to regulate civil and political as well as moral conduct, had also great attraction for Leo. He was fond of hearing cases of casuistry discussed before him. One of the most extraordinary works, dating its composition if not its publication to this pontificate, was *The Book of the Courtier* ("Libro del Cortegiano") by the Count Baldasare Castiglione, who resided in Rome as the

[1] See Lorenzo's poem *Ambra* for a description of this marvellous villa.

ambassador of the Duke of Urbino.[1] In this a picture is given of the ideal courtier, accompanied by abundant advice as to the regulation of personal conduct by the rules of politeness and good breeding. No volume had greater popularity than this, nor are its maxims without point and reference to the deportment of a gentleman to-day. To no one at his Court did Leo show a greater measure of respect than to Castiglione.

To scholars who devoted themselves to recording the annals of the age, and the deeds of those who had made or were making the history of his time, Leo evinced himself a discriminating patron. As regards Machiavelli (1469–1527), he not alone revealed himself as magnanimous and noble-hearted when the author of the *Prince* fell into his power after having engaged in the conspiracy of Capponi and Boscoli to assassinate the Medici subsequent to their restoration in 1513, but he conferred on him many marks of his favour which the historian had done little to deserve. His *History of Florence*, written at the request of Clement VII., to whom it is dedicated, cannot therefore be ascribed to the age of Leo; the *Prince* and his *Discourses on Livy*, however, were certainly composed during that epoch, and exercised no little influence upon Florentine politics. But the two historians to whom Leo extended his patronage in the largest degree were Guicciardini (1482–1540) and Paulus Jovius (1483–1552). Although the former had only produced a few isolated compositions, such was the acuteness of his mind, the justness and moderation of his sentiments,

[1] The book though completed in 1517–1518, was not published until 1528. But it circulated in MS. copies at the Courts both of the Pope and the Duke.

and the sagacity and prevision displayed in his political conduct, that he became the trusted friend of the pontiff from the hour they met. He was employed by Leo in many enterprises of "pith and moment." Paulus Jovius was fortunate enough to obtain the favour not only of Leo, but of his two successors Adrian and Clement. Leo's patronage of him, however, is more creditable to his heart than his head. The *History of his own Time* by Jovius is a farrago of marvels, legends, and impossibilities, interspersed with glowing panegyrics of his friends and bitter vituperation of his enemies. Yet Leo had the assurance to say he considered it to be little inferior to Livy. Pierio Valeriano (Petrus Valerianus) (1492–1558) was one of Leo's chamberlains, an office to which he was appointed through having attracted the pontiff's attention by his excellent Latin poetry. He afterwards produced an interesting work on the *Misfortunes of Scholars* (*De Literatorum Infelicitate*) and a great treatise on *Hieroglyphics*, wherein, though he has displayed profound learning, he has also manifested no little credulity. Nor must we omit the names of two historians who rather wrote *upon* than *during* the epoch of Leo x., to wit, Filippo Nerli (1485–1556)—who was so favourable to the Medici, with whom he was allied by ties of kinship, that he has been called their panegyrist; and Jacopo Nardi (1476–1556), who was just as bitterly inimical to them as the other was partial. Like the rival histories of Greece by Mitford and Grote, their works may be read with advantage by those who can peruse them with the addition of the necessary grains of salt.

Although the Vatican Library owed its establishment upon modern lines to Pope Nicholas v.,[1] who purchased for it about 5000 volumes of valuable classical and biblical MSS. at an estimated cost of 40,000 scudi, Leo x. comes next to him as its most munificent patron. Following the example of his father and his great-grandfather Cosimo, his envoys and messengers, despatched on affairs of State to foreign lands, were ordered to avail themselves of every opportunity to obtain those precious remains of antiquity, which were supposed still to exist in Europe, Greece, and Asia Minor; while, as Roscoe says, men of learning were frequently specially despatched to remote and barbarous countries for the sole purpose of discovering and rescuing such works from destruction. For example, in 1517 John Heytmers de Zonvelben was sent on a mission of exploration to Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and the Baltic provinces, for the sole purpose of inquiring after literary works, and particularly the MSS. of historical compositions.[2] To the different sovereigns, through whose dominions he would pass, Leo furnished him with letters asking them to assist him in whatever manner they might find possible. The same course was adopted when he despatched Agostino Beazzano to Venice, the Doge Loredano being directed to spare no expense to further his quest. These efforts were not without fruit. Many valuable MSS. were secured, particularly the first five books

[1] Cf. Schaff, *Renaissance*. Assemani and De Rossi date the Vatican Library from the Gospel of Mark, which was written in Rome for Romans, and from the parchments which "Paul, the prisoner" in Rome, ordered Timothy to bring from Troas (2 Tim. iv. 13).

[2] Roscoe, *Leo X.*, vol. ii. p. 279.

of the *Annales* of Tacitus,[1] which were committed to Beroaldo to be edited and annotated; while the famous *Codex Vaticanus*, or MS. of the New Testament, was received from Cardinal Bessarion.

That this magnificent collection of books might have suitable custodians, Leo appointed a succession of distinguished men to the offices of *custode*, or keeper, and of *bibliothecarius*, or librarian. The former position was held first by Lorenzo Parmenio, and next by Fausto Sabeo; while the librarianship, after being bestowed on Tomaso Fedra Inghirami, was on his death conferred upon Filippo Beroaldo. Inghirami was celebrated for an excellent compendium of the history of Rome, also for a commentary on the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, and *Scholia in Plautum*; while his successor, besides his edition of *Tacitus*, for nearly two centuries the standard recension, was eminently distinguished for Latin verse. Beroaldo, however, did not long enjoy the dignity, and its next holder was Zanobio Acciaiuoli, whose proficiency in the Greek and Hebrew languages was such as to render him one of the most distinguished Hellenists and Hebraists of his day. No sooner had he been appointed to the librarianship, than he plunged with his wonted enthusiasm into the herculean task of selecting and arranging the ancient public documents deposited in the Vatican Library, containing imperial privileges, bulls, and instruments, of which he formed a detailed index. His unwearied industry undermined a frame by no means constitutionally strong, and once more the office became vacant. This time it was conferred on one of

[1] Brought from the Abbey of Corvey in Westphalia by Angelo Arcimboldi, who was rewarded with 500 zechins.

the most extraordinary men of the the Renaissance epoch, whose abilities excited the wonder and the admiration of his contemporaries — Girolamo Aleander. Besides standing in the very first rank as a linguist, —his proficiency in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew being almost unsurpassed,—he was regarded as an authority in theology, philosophy, and science. Despatched by Leo to Germany as papal nuncio in 1520, with orders to "extinguish the Reformation," he found in Luther more than his match in intellectual robustness, however much the great reformer might prove his inferior in the graces of culture.

But the list of distinguished scholars and men of letters whom the Humanistic bent of Leo attracted to Rome might be enlarged almost indefinitely. The Rome of Leo was, in a word, an epitome of the entire culture of the Italy of his day. Never before, and probably never again, in the world's history will such a vast and varied assemblage of talented and cultured men and women be gathered together within the compass of a city. Poets, Latin and Italian, historians, moralists, philosophers, scientists, antiquarians, scholars, theologians, met in the gay salons of the Vatican, one and all bent upon attracting the attention of that corpulent, sensual-looking individual, whose appearance was so repellent, yet whose manners were so fascinating. Novelists like Bandello, whose stories of contemporary life are valuable pictures of the period, rubbed shoulders with the grave Cardinal Egidio Canisio, the great Latin orator of his day. Papal Secretaries and Abbreviators were each paying court to those cardinals from whom they expected some favour or a word of commendation on their

behalf dropped to Leo which might lead to preferment. In one corner might perchance be seen Baldassare Turini, the great builder and decorator; in another, the mighty Bramante, the architect of St. Peter's, whose genius has never really received the recognition that is its due. Groups of antiquaries and sculptors were discussing the recent finds of antique sculpture, "the reclining statues of the Nile and Tiber," found amid the ruins of the Iseum near San Stefano in Caco, or the "Antinous" discovered in the Baths of Trajan. Buffoons were to be seen making merry in one apartment with the licentious satirist Pietro Aretino, while in another Leo's versatile State Minister and Master of the Revels, Cardinal Bibiena, was striving to compose the differences of sundry choleric Humanists, whose discussions upon the respective merits of Plato *v.* Aristotle—that staple theme of debate—threatened to lead them from logic to loggerheads.

Finally, Leo's inherited love of art was evinced in the constant patronage he extended to Raphael. The world owes a deep debt of gratitude to the Pontiff for the interest he showed in the great artist's welfare from the day when Raphael's kinsman Bramante, when he lay a-dying, commended the young painter to the notice of his Holiness as one in every respect fitted to succeed him as architect of St. Peter's. Marvellous indeed, is the amount of work Raphael was able to accomplish for Leo, and as marvellous is the fact of the high standard of excellence maintained throughout. The Chambers and the Loggia of the Vatican furnished opportunities wherein the genius of Raphael, both as a painter and an architect, rose conspicuously into evidence, in the extraordinary ease wherewith he sur-

mounted difficulties that would have daunted any other man.

Nor was Leo's patronage only conferred on Raphael. While the circumstance is to be regretted that a misunderstanding marred the pleasant intercourse which had existed, and should otherwise have been maintained, between those who had been brought up together, as were Leo and Michael Angelo, the fault lay in the haughty temper of the great sculptor, who perhaps resented the divided sovereignty of art which in Leo's epoch he was obliged to share with Raphael, while in the pontificate of Julius II. he had reigned alone. Leo's favour was extended to his father's friend, Lucca della Robbia, whose ancestral art of painting on *Terra Invitriata*, or glazed earth, was carried by him to a still greater standard of excellence. The arms of Leo X., executed in tile-work, are still visible in the papal Loggia of the Vatican. Andrea Cantucci was called up to Rome to execute, in marble *basso rilievo*, those scenes in sacred history intended to adorn the chapel of our Lady of Loretto, and the work executed earned for him the warmest commendation of his patron. Among other artists whose talents Leo employed in his endless schemes for making the Rome of his age the Paradise of Europe, and in some degree a restoration of what it had been during the era of Augustus, were Francia Bigio, Baccio Bandinelli, Girolamo Lombardo, Andrea del Sarto, Jacopo da Puntarmo, and many others of less note. Engraving upon copper, an art which for some years had been rapidly rising into esteem and popularity by the labours of Antonio Pollajuolo, Sandro Botticelli, and Andrea Mantegna, was finally brought to a degree of perfection—beyond

which it has really advanced but little—by Marc-Antonio di Francia. Raphael introduced the young engraver to Leo, and henceforward his hands were kept busy in reproducing for the pontiff those engravings of the works of Raphael which have had no small share in extending the fame of the great painter.

But the theme is endless. One stands amazed at the many-sided interest of this marvellous Humanist pontiff. When we consider that he occupied the Chair of St. Peter only a few months over eight years, that previous to his election to the Papacy he had been fighting with poverty almost since the death of his father, we cannot refrain from wonder that, in the time, he should have been able to do so much for the encouragement of literature and the arts. When we recall the fact, however, that in addition to all these acts of patronage during his pontificate, he vigilantly repaired the roads and bridges within the Roman territories, erected or enlarged many Papal palaces in various parts of his dominions and placed Roman education on a satisfactory footing, the wonder deepens. He also reformed and reorganised the church ritual by introducing choral services and ordering that music should form a principal part of public worship. On Gabriel Merino he conferred the Archbishopric of Bari, and on Francesco Paolesa the rank of Archdeacon, solely for their eminence in church music.

Granted that Leo left the Papacy twelve hundred thousand ducats in debt, granted that his instincts seem to have been more pagan than Christian, granted that his influence upon morality was always on the side of relaxing the strictness of the code, his own life was pure and unspotted. The falsehoods that were

circulated of his immorality have failed to stand investigation, while the statements as to his personal observance of the rule of celibacy have been curiously verified in more than one instance. He was never addicted to the pleasures of the table. Amid the most splendid banquets, whether given by himself or others, he would dine on vegetables and fruits, and he rigidly fasted twice a week. His weakness lay in a Medicean love of pomp and splendour, in a desire to pose on all occasions as the great Humanist pontiff whose hand was ever open to encourage and reward merit. His influence upon the Renaissance was great, because the whole bent of his mind was towards the acquisition and advancement of literature and the arts.

True it is that, by the time his epoch closed, the sun of Humanism had long passed its meridian and was slowly sinking towards its setting. No longer was Humanism held in reverence by all and sundry, because having proved untrue to its mission, which was moral as well as intellectual, it had debased its votaries. Learning had burst its class-bonds, and had become the privilege of the many in place of the prerogative of the few. Giovanni de' Medici, however, must be allowed to have fulfilled his destiny. He had carried the torch of learning forward into new planes of social existence. He had found Rome an intellectual Sahara; he filled her with the learning, the literature, the arts, the science, the theology of the Italian peninsula. There have been many greater pontiffs than Leo, many who by their policy aggrandised the Holy See to a greater extent than he, but it is matter for question whether there has ever been an occupant of the Papal Chair whose bent was so predominatingly Humanistic,

and who considered all things but loss, even the sacred mysteries of religion, if only the cause of culture progressed and prevailed. During his pontificate the "stamp of universality" was given to letters and the arts by an intellectual sovereign whose pre-eminence was acknowledged by all who made any pretensions to scholarship and literature. "This epoch," says Symonds, "constituted the perfect bloom of the Renaissance, destined to survive the decay of Humanism and to be for subsequent civilisation what chivalry was for the Middle Ages."

CHAPTER VII

The Age of Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, otherwise Clement VII., 1478–1534

Popes—Sixtus IV., 1471; Innocent VIII., 1484; Alexander VI., 1492; Pius III., 1503; Julius II., 1503; Leo X., 1513; Clement VII., 1521

The death of Leo X. in December 1521—a death, as we have said, not unaccompanied by grave suspicions of foul play—threw the Sacred College into a state of the wildest panic and confusion. Italy was at that time the stake for which both Charles V. of Spain and Francis I. of France were playing, and Leo, as has been noted, coquetted in turn with both. At the precise juncture when he died he had, as we have said, allied himself with the former to drive the French out of Italy. His policy, however, had neither permanence nor prevision to recommend it. A single French success and he would have thrown himself into the arms of Francis, while his lack of foresight as to the goal whither all the designs of Charles tended, namely, to use the Papacy as a tool to enable him to rule his dominions, was complete.

When his death occurred, therefore, the Sacred College was in doubt whether to allow the interests of Spain or France to obtain predominance. One of the

two had to be acknowledged as the arbiter of th destinies of Europe, inasmuch as the situation was on dominated by considerations purely political. After conclave lasting many days, the influence of Charle prevailed, and his tutor, the Cardinal of Tortosa, wa elected by a narrow majority. No sooner had they done so than the members of the Consistory curse their folly in having placed an ignorant barbarian i the seat of Leo. Rome gave itself up to despair. Nor when he arrived, did he dissipate by his appearance o his policy the injurious reports circulated about him Of all Leo's splendid retinue of servants and attendants numbering in all some hundreds, he retained but four Two Flemish valets sufficed for his personal needs, and to these he gave each evening *one ducat* for the expenses of the next day's living. One Flemish servant made his bed, washed his linen, and cooked his food. He detested art, and closed as many of the picture and statue galleries as he could, with the angry murmur "Pagan idols all." The army of scholars and men o letters for whom places had been found in the papa service were dismissed in a day. Berni wrote one o his cleverest satires on the situation, while all the wits in Rome affixed their squibs and epigrams to "Pasquin" until Adrian threatened to throw the statue into the Tiber. Short indeed was his pontificate. Before twenty months had come and gone he was dead, and the Romans affixed the inscription to his doctor's doo —*Liberatori patriæ Senatus Populusque Romanus.*

[1] Pasquin was an Italian tailor of the fifteenth century noted for hi wit. Some time after his death a mutilated statue was dug up, abou which the antiquaries were not clear as to what it represented. As i stood opposite Pasquin's house, the Romans called it "Pasquin," an used the torso as the depository of their satiric effusions.

In the minds of the gay laughter-loving inhabitants of the Eternal City, not yet sobered by the awful scenes and experiences of the Sack of Rome, the horror inspired by the rule of Adrian, contrasted as its sombreness and meanness were by the pomp and pageant, the culture and the artistic efflorescence that had distinguished the age of Leo, made for the election of another Medicean pontiff, in the hope that with him the glory and the grandeur of the departed epoch might be revived. Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, the natural son of that Giuliano whom the daggers of the Pazzi conspirators had slaughtered in Florence in 1478, was accordingly appointed Pope on 25th September 1523, while Rome and the Romans seemed almost to go mad for joy over the event. "We live once more," wrote Paulus Jovius to Bembo, then residing in Padua.

The earlier life of the Giulio de' Medici had been largely spent by the side of his cousin Giovanni. What the latter enjoyed in the way of honours, the former shared; what Giovanni suffered in the way of troubles and reverses, Giulio endured along with him. To his uncle, the Magnifico, he cherished the warmest affection, and this led him to manifest loyal adherence to the fortunes of his cousin. Having told the story of the latter's life, we have in great part told that of Giulio. He accompanied Giovanni to Rome; he shared with him his exile, and often sustained his drooping hopes. He accompanied him on his tour through Europe; and on the return of the latter to Rome, after Alexander laid aside his enmity towards the Medici, and when Julius began his pontificate, he showed himself always the faithful Abdiel, true to his trust whoever else might fail. Devotion such as this merited return.

Giovanni always had a deep affection for his cousin, and placed great reliance upon his judgment. On the restoration of the family to their honours in Florence, he assigned to Giulio and to his own brother Giuliano the temporary government of the city. Finally, after his elevation to the Papacy, as soon as he conveniently could, without laying himself open to the charge of seeking to aggrandise his own house, he raised Giulio to the rank of cardinal, and thus gave him the stepping-stone to the Papacy.

Giulio's life prior to becoming pontiff was simple in the extreme. He was more of an ascetic even than Leo. His piety was deep and sincere, his morals irreproachable. Letters and the arts found in him a true Medici, his patronage of them being liberal and enlightened.[1] In some respects he was a more discriminating patron than his cousin. Leo often gave of his bounty to most unworthy beneficiaries, Giulio never. He always satisfied himself of the merit of the individual before he opened his purse.

In the collation and annotation of the classic texts, and particularly of Plautus, Terence, Cicero, Horace, and Juvenal in Latin and Homer, Euripides and Plato in Greek, he showed a keen interest, seeking to infuse into Lilius Giraldus, Celio Calcagnini, Valerianus, Trissino, Bembo, Sadoleto, and others that enthusiasm which burned so brightly in his own breast. During the last days of Leo's pontificate, he was regarded as one of the wisest, most reliable and earnest-minded of all the cardinal-patrons of letters in Rome. Nay, during the terrible twenty months of Adrian's rule, when learning was at a discount, and when, in place of

[1] Muratori, x.; Paris de Grassis, *Diar. inedit.*

men of letters and artists, one found none but shavelings and preaching friars in the Vatican, he was the sole hope of the Humanists of Rome. His palace was ever open to men of real scholarship or learning; but upon the charlatan pretenders to a culture they did not possess, his wit flashed forth without fail in withering shafts of sarcasm.

Although the pontificate of Clement VII. lasted from 1523 to 1534, the sole period of interest to us is that portion of it from his election to the Papal Chair to the Sack of Rome in 1527. With that terrible retribution on the gay and godless city, that had battened on the superstition and credulity of Christendom for so long, the Italian Renaissance reaches its close. When the troops of Charles V. and Frundsberg's "*Pious Landsknechts*" were bought off from the Eternal City, they left behind them little better than a pile of ruins. Learning had for ever taken her flight across the Alps, and Rome henceforward was to be regarded, not as the centre of European culture, but merely as the seat of the Head of the Roman Hierarchy, as the spiritual metropolis of one of the sects of the world's religions.

When Clement began his pontificate, a feeling of restless apprehension had taken possession of Europe. That the political atmosphere was heavily charged with the electric fluid of international disturbances was apparent to every observer of the signs of the times. Had he been a strong, self-reliant nature like Pope Julius II., or even a selfish man like Sixtus IV., he could have beaten Charles V. with his own weapons, and perhaps have effected a new shuffle of the cards as to who should hold the chief power in Europe. But Clement was handicapped by his loyalty to Leo. He

wished to pursue his cousin's policy, therefore he hedged and doubled, now promising, anon breaking his promises, striving to please and humour all, and ending by displeasing and alienating everyone, even his friends the Humanists.

Clement was a vacillating, courtly, cultured man, with all the instincts of a scholar in him, and with a thorough detestation of the game of politics he was daily obliged to play. Adequately to master the situation, would have taxed the genius of a Gregory VII. or an Innocent III., and Clement VII. was but a pious, well-meaning lover of letters, to whom the collation of a new codex of Pliny with the *textus receptus* would have been a task infinitely more to his mind than that of fighting the foes of the Church.

During those four years between his election and the Sack of Rome, he did all he could towards the fostering of literature. The Roman *Sapienza* or University received a large share of his patronage, even as it had received a large share of that of Leo. He divided it into a *Gymnasium* or High-School and the *Sapienza* or University, the former designed to act as a feeder to the latter. To men of letters outside the clerical orders he was exceedingly liberal; while to those who devoted themselves to literature within the Church he was quick to manifest his appreciation of worthy work. Paulus Jovius was consecrated by him Bishop of Nocera, and Marcus Musurus, Bishop of Malvasia. To Vida, the author of the *Christiad*, he assigned the See of Alba in Piedmont; to Giberti, the Stylist, that of Verona. To name all the scholars and ecclesiastics who had made their name in literature, to whom he either gave preferment or raised to the purple, would

be impossible. During these four years of his pontificate, prior to the Sack of Rome, he won for himself the reputation of a discriminating Mæcenas, though some of the fustian poets and rhodomontade dramatists were inclined to complain that he neglected them, when Leo would probably have listened to their lays and given them a few gold pieces to get rid of them.[1]

The Roman Academy was patronised by him, although he was only present at one of its meetings when it assembled in the gardens of the Vatican. Angelo Colocci, who had been Leo's private secretary, a man of rare culture and a peerless Grecian; Blosius Palladius, a Latin poet of considerable merit, and an Italian sonnet-writer of some reputation; Egidio Canisio, the General of the Augustinian Order; Andreas Fulvio and Bartolommeo Marliano, whose studies of Vitruvius and Frontinus and of the architectural remains of the ancients made them the greatest antiquarians of their age; and Alessandro Farnese (afterwards Paul III.), were the principal members of the Academy, and in consequence those who were admitted to close intimacy with the Pope.[2] The social circle around Clement was much the same as that which had gathered round his cousin, seeing that only twenty months separated their pontificates. His reception-rooms and ante-chambers were filled with scholars and men of letters, churchmen and artists, soldiers and doctors of the law, wealthy bankers and physicians, nobles and commoners, meeting all together in that strange heterogeneous crowd which, as in Leo's days, seemed to be gathered from every nation and

[1] Cf. Fabronius, *Vita Leon X.*, p. 204; Jovian, *Vita Leon X.*, iv. 80.
[2] Mosheim, *Ecclesias. Hist.*, bk. iv., Cent. xvi.

town in Europe. Verily a marvellous if withal a somewhat motley multitude, whose one bond of union was love of culture and of the arts.

Such too continued to be the character of Clement's receptions, even after the pontiff had certain knowledge that there had begun to roll towards Rome that awful tide of Spanish barbarism and ferocity, of Flemish ignorance and bigotry, and of German hatred of Italian duplicity—all of them attributes and passions incarnate in the host of Charles v. — which was ere long to be let loose upon the hapless people of Rome. To tell the story of the sack of that beautiful city is to relate the history of the blackest crime which disgraced the career of Charles v. After making all possible allowances for him, due to the vacillation and duplicity of Clement acting upon a spirit naturally impetuous, but whose one sterling attribute was his abhorrence of falsehood, a frightful balance of blame rests on the head of Charles. Doubtless, were all known, he had given instructions to the Constable of Bourbon or George von Frundsberg, the leader of the "*Pious Landsknechts*"[1] that Clement was only to be frightened into submission, and then the army was to be called off. But Frundsberg was stricken down by paralysis on the plains of Milan, and Bourbon was shot at the very outset of the attack upon the Eternal City.[2] Thereafter that horde of fiends in the form of men were

[1] Van Dyke tells us that the original members of these mercenary bands had been the military retainers of the knights, whose employment had been lost by the decay of the feudal system. They had developed a loose organisation, bound by unwritten laws. Cf. *Age of the Renascence*, p. 369.

[2] Benvenuto Cellini used to boast he had aimed and fired the cannon whose shot killed the Constable.

leaderless, for the Prince of Orange was powerless. Rome fell after two days' resistance. Of what followed humanity shudders as it thinks of it. For nine months the soldiers of the attacking force rioted and wallowed in every kind of iniquity, cruelty, bestiality, and sacrilege. Relics the rarest, literary treasures the most priceless, paintings by the old masters, as unique as they were exquisite, were crushed under foot or tossed into the flames.

"When the soldiers were through, it was said that no one over three years was left alive, unless their lives were bought by ransom. A certain bishop bought himself three times, and at last was murdered. The prisoners were dragged about with ropes to beg ransom from their friends, like Cardinal Cajetan, who was hauled and kicked through the streets until he had collected what his captors demanded. When the money was not to be had, came torture. . . . Nothing was sacred to the crowd of Spaniards, Germans, and Italians drunk with wine, lust, and blood. They stabled their horses in the chapels of St. Peter's, broke open and plundered the coffin of Julius II., played dice on the high altar, and got drunk out of the vessels of the mass. . . . In one of the market-places drunken soldiers tried to force a poor priest to give the consecrated host to an ass, and he died under their torture. So the smoke of Rome's agony went up to heaven, and the long hoarded riches of her luxurious palaces became the spoil of the cruel soldiers of Spain and Germany. The booty was reckoned conservatively at over eight millions; some put it as high as twenty millions."[1]

Against the scholars and Humanists of Rome the rage of these northern barbarians was especially directed,

[1] Van Dyke, *Age of the Renascence* ("Eras of the Christian Church Series." T. & T. Clark).

and scarcely one of those men of letters who had been the pride and the glory of Rome, and whose devotion to the cause of the Revival of Learning had been so ceaseless and whole-hearted, remained to tell the horrors of the hour. When Clement VII., the last of the Renaissance Medici, after watching in heart-broken anguish from the castle of St. Angelo, whither he had fled for refuge, the progress of the pillage, and hearing the shrieks of women outraged and murdered, and of hapless infants tossed in the air to be spitted on a "pious" landsknecht's spear as they descended, consented to buy off the butchers for 400,000 florins, the Rome of Poggio and of Platina, of Sixtus and of Alexander, of Leo and of Pomponazzo, of Blondus, Alberti, and of Raphael had become a thing of the past. When she recovered from her sorrow and her desolation, it was to enter upon a new career, dictated by a new policy. Humanism and the days and ways of the Humanists, their semi-pagan morality and their entirely pagan beliefs, their contempt of all that did not savour of antiquity, had given place to a truer scholarship which weighed calmly and dispassionately the claims of antiquity to inspire the Present, and which insisted upon classicism being estimated according to its utility, and not according to the superstitious reverence wherewith it had become invested by the fictions of romantic imagination.

The first stirrings of the Counter-Reformation in the Roman Church were beginning to make themselves felt. Although Clement continued a true Medicean to the end of his days, he realised that Humanism was played out in Italy. "The Germans have carried away learning along with our other treasures across the Alps,"

ne said, somewhat sadly to Aleander. The courtly cardinal, as the story goes, attempted to turn a compliment that wheresover a Medicean Pope might be, there was culture incarnate. But Clement shook his head. 'The Papacy has nearly lost her hold on Europe by playing the patron of letters; if she is to regain her ground, it must be along intensely spiritual, not intellectual, lines."[1]

Clement was by no means the worst of the Medici. Stained though his memory is by the fact that he utilised the remains of the army which sacked Rome to capture and enslave Florence, which had once more made a glorious bid for freedom under Francesco Ferruccio, he was more the victim of a hard taskmaster in the person of Charles v. than a man consciously and of design a lover of oppression. The emperor wished Northern Italy to be in the hands of a prince whose devotion to Spanish interests would be beyond question. He proposed to Clement to assist him to regain possession of Florence on these conditions. And so the Medici became *de jure* as well as *de facto* rulers of Florence, never again to lose their power until the line became extinct.

Had Clement remained a Humanist cardinal, his name probably would have passed down to posterity as that of a man whose passionate devotion to letters, the arts, and sciences was worthy of all praise. In place of that, the commendation that ought to follow his noble patronage of learning is lost in a bitter passion of contempt for the man who, despite all the legacy of troubles he received as a bequest from Leo,

[1] Bellarmin, *Op.*, tom. iii. p. 940; cf. Pet. Mart., *Loc. Com.*, Class . c. xi.

must nevertheless by his vacillation be held as the proximate cause of the Sack of Rome and of the extinction of letters in Italy. He had been trained to consider dissimulation as the prime requisite of a diplomatist. But vacillation and hesitation are fatal qualities for those who in diplomacy would excel in dissimulation. The chief quality in the character of him who was perhaps the greatest master of dissimulation modern Europe has seen, Cardinal de Richelieu, was iron inflexibility of purpose under all the turns and doubles in the tortuous "course" of politics. Had Charles v. found Clement constant even in his opposition to himself, the fact is more than likely. Rome never would have suffered. It was the helplessness of not knowing whither Clement's vacillation would lead him, that decided the emperor upon letting slip the dogs of war upon the Papacy, in order to terrify "the old man of the Vatican" into abject submission.

Such is the story of the relation of the Medici to the Italian Renaissance. With all its romance and fascination, it is a mingled web of good and ill. While, on the one side, it is the story of noble devotion to worthy ends; on the other, it is a record of shame and political betrayal. From the death of Giovanni, the father of Cosimo, to the Sack of Rome, a period of exactly a century intervenes. During that time the Medici family, one and all, manifested themselves as amongst the truest patrons of letters the world has known. Had they chosen to spend upon unworthy pleasures the sums they devoted to fostering scholarship and learning, how great would have been the world's loss to-day? Granted they did much that was worthy of moral reprobation

much also that was politically contemptible, does the fact that as regards the Renaissance they were the most munificent and devoted of patrons in the history of letters go for naught as a countervailing plea?

By whom is the mighty balance to be struck? In even the best of them we admit that the warp of intellectual good and of lofty self-sacrifice in the development of learning is vitiated by the woof of political self-seeking, degrading oppression of liberty-loving patriots, like Palla degli Strozzi, a Humanist like themselves, and of persistent pandering to the worst passions that can find harbour in the human breast. They were a strange mixture of the grand and of the grovelling, of the mean and of the magnanimous. As Humanists no praise is too high for their deserts, as politicians no condemnation is too deep to denounce their perfidy. By whom, we repeat, is the nett balance to be struck of blessing or of blame? Even time, the touchstone of all things, has left the verdict in abeyance as to how much of their wrong-doing was due to faults of hereditary temperament, and how much to vices induced by their time. Were they responsible for all attributed to them, or were they the victims of circumstance, the scapegoats of subordinates who had exceeded their instructions? Were they fully conscious, moreover, of all their policy implied, and of its ultimate as well as its proximate consequences? The moral quality of definite action we can estimate, but who can appraise the effect on the mind of a noble purpose that has been frustrated, or a good intention that has miscarried? Are results always the measure of the motives that prompted special lines of action?

If so, success will alone have ethical value, and Burns was all wrong when he wrote—

> "What's done we partly may compute,
> But ken na what's resisted."

Men may propose, but they cannot dispose, and the Medici were but men. Their fault was persistently to underrate the magnitude of the forces opposed to them. Goethe seems to pierce to the very heart of the case as it affects the Medici when he says—

"*Glücklich, wer den Fehlschuss von seinem Wünschen auf seine Kräfte bald gewahr wird*—Happy the man who early learns the wide chasm that lies between his purposes and his powers!"

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